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The Presbyterian Record

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2004

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PRESBYTERIAN Record

January 2004

Maternity leave

How does the church
support the family?

Exploring our spiritual side through art and sport

A photo essay

Philip Yancey spreads his rumours in Toronto

New process aims to speed
residential schools claims



Young families deserve our support

The church must be willing to walk the talk in providing maternity benefits

Christians around the world have been celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ into a human family. Just as it still is for the vast majority of families today, Mary and Joseph didn't have an attending physician or even a midwife. And Mary certainly didn't have maternity leave with Employment Insurance benefits.

To that extent, it's a measure of how well off 21st-century Canadians are that our cover story this month concerns how the church's top-up maternity benefits are calculated and paid to Presbyterian Church ministers. There is a disagreement between the church's Pension and Benefits Board and a church session over just how these benefits are calculated. The way the board adds up benefits has cost the congregation in Waterdown — near the western tip of Lake Ontario — about \$3,000 a year more than the congregation's way of calculating things.

It's rare in life that one side is wholly wrong and the other wholly right. This story, which you can read beginning on page 12, is no different. It's also important not to get lost in the details (although we have tried to present them fairly and accurately). But there are some basic principles that are important for everyone in the church to consider.

The central question is: Who is supposed to benefit from maternity leave? The newborn or newly adopted child and parents may seem the obvious answer, but that can get lost in bureaucracies, even with everyone's best intentions. Both the state and the church uphold the principle that families are the basic unit of society and creating a framework for healthy families who are raising children deserves the best support we can afford.

The state does this through various tax breaks and by legislating a leave of up to one year for parents that protects their jobs. It also exacts insurance premiums from employers and employees that pay our benefits when we take a maternity and/or parental leave.

In part, the church supports families by topping up EI benefits for up to 25 weeks of leave. Congregations, however, still bear the larger responsibility in providing housing and utilities for the family. But is this a responsibility of individual congregations or of the wider church, especially since younger, less experienced ministers — those one would expect to be starting families — are more likely to be in small, less affluent congregations?

Beyond the details of the disagreement, there is a question of how such disputes get resolved efficiently and fairly in the church. This matter arose about a year ago and is still unsettled.

The witness of Israel's prophets is that a society is judged by how it treats its weakest members. The late U.S. vice-president Hubert Humphrey put it this way: "The moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children"

But if the congregation appears to have the stronger case in this story, their solution is less convincing. They are apparently asking General Assembly to consider dropping the top-up altogether and making an equivalent sum of money available to congregations whose ministers are on leave to help them with housing costs for an interim minister.

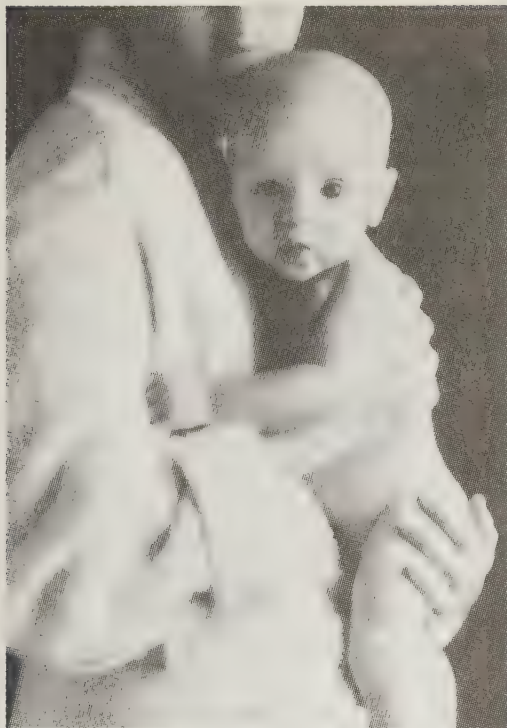
The problem with this plan is that it aims to benefit the congregation, not the family. Not only does this appear to run against the church's ethic of supporting the family, it also places the burden on the more vulnerable of the three parties involved. The congregation has a point that the national church benefits plan (paid into by all congregations) can more easily bear the burden of top-up costs than the individual congregation whose minister is on leave. Likewise, a congregation can more easily bear the burden of paying a top-up than the family can accept the loss of the top-up in favour of the congregation receiving a small housing allowance for interim ministry.

Put succinctly, who is affected more by the \$3,000 at stake here: the national benefits plan, the congregation or the family having a new baby?

If the church really wants to show support for new families, that blunt adage about putting your money where your mouth is would seem apposite.

Good stewardship of our monetary resources is important; good stewardship of our human resources is vastly more important. If God so generously gave us his Son, born into a humble family and a meagre setting, surely we should be as generous as possible in nurturing new life in our clergy families.

David Harris



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Susan Kerr and Jessie.
Photo by Andrew Kerr.

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Thanks for a remarkable life

Thank you for publishing the October Lives Lived column that captured the remarkable life of Rev. Dr. Donald MacMillan. I knew him well for almost 20 years, but from a different perspective — that of a young child growing to adulthood.

My parents moved next door to Donald and Jean MacMillan in 1961 when I was four years old. I visited the MacMillans with childish frequency: ringing their beautiful doorbell chimes, patting the deer (the stuffed stag's head in their front hall) and chatting with their canary. I was always greeted by smiles and gentle kindness; outside of my family, they were the closest role models I had for everyday Christian living. My parents had unending respect and, perhaps, even awe for this couple. Donald's gladiolas and Jean's rhubarb pie were well known in our home; but, more significant, their shared commonality as parents (and as Presbyterians, no doubt!) made them role models of sorts for my parents, whose families were in another province.

Our family maintained close ties with the MacMillans after they retired to Finch, Ont., in 1979. As I experienced the death of both parents over the years, I came to understand Donald's true calling as a minister. His presence and words provided not only comfort but a resounding testament to the power of our Lord in his resurrection. Donald's unexpected visit to my dying mother was transformative; her face lit up when she saw him.

In Joseph McLelland's article, Dr. MacMillan's extensive contributions as a theologian and a man of letters are well outlined. I offer this personal perspective of the late Donald MacMillan who was not only "a scholar and a gentleman" but also a truly humble man of God.

Cathy Gale,
Calgary

Our mentors in Taiwan

What a joy to read about the teaching of the church in Taiwan (Taiwan Singers' Music "Flows out of Faith") in the

November *Record*. They tell of building a choir on prayer, a spiritual life and God's Word, with the presence of God's Holy Spirit in their lives. No blind leap there, but real glory for the Lord.

May we, by the grace of God, build as our mentors in Taiwan teach.

William Graydon,
Ballyduff, Ont.

Fanning the FLAMES

Without saying so outright, Peter Plymley II appears to be disillusioned with the FLAMES Initiative (October). He seems to think it is lasting too long and that a one-year go at each facet is too limiting. His critique of "at your fingertips" spirituality is particularly sharp.

Peter is right. The artificial nature of the FLAMES Initiative was obvious from the start. Following a much publicized think-tank and a disappointing response from lower courts, the 1997 Assembly Council presented six worthwhile priorities in terms of long-range planning: six areas on which the church should focus its energies in the years ahead. It was intended that, while each

priority would be highlighted in turn, all six would be emphasized every year. But the latter has scarcely occurred. Every 12 months, we change direction and hardly hear a word about previous years.

I wonder how many congregations have made use of even one facet of the program and whether it has made any lasting difference.

There is still another year to go. Hang in, Peter.

Rev. Bruce Cossar,
Kingston, Ont.

How to keep them from going

The September articles that focused on the statistics of the decline in church membership seem to indicate the church is in trouble — or is it? This is a wake-up call we need to heed. It is also timely because this is the year of the FLAMES focus on spirituality. Sometimes we miss the spiritual issue when thinking about church growth. We often focus on numbers — as if church growth is only reflected in how many people are in the pews on Sunday mornings. But there is more to church growth.



Living in the Maritimes, I have had contact with many small rural churches. Some see themselves as part of the statistics in the decline of the Presbyterian Church. They often adopt the attitude that their congregations are dying and there is nothing that can be done about it. However, this is not the first time nor will it be the last that churches have struggled with numbers. We need to help these churches realize the Spirit is still with them.

Churches need to learn how to recapture their spiritual health — to recognize God's Spirit moving in and among them. Once they have reignited their own spirituality, they can share this flame with others. Focusing on evangelism is an important aspect of any church; however, the people in the congregation need to become spiritually mature first before they can share it with others who are spiritually hungry.

If the spirituality of a congregation is healthy and growing, others in the community will notice. If the people in the community sense that something good is happening in the church, that the people in the congregation are truly connected to God and that God is doing great things for and through them, they will want to share in that. If we build the spirituality of congregations, others will come — drawn into God's love and care through the church!

Beth Mattinson,
New Minas, N.S.,
candidate for the ministry of
Word and Sacraments

I read the September cover story *Where Have They Gone?* with interest. The title may well be part of the answer. This is such a "Presbyterian" question to ask! Why are we not asking, "Where will they come from?" As long as we stay focused on ourselves, we are likely to go on shrinking. Only when we start realizing the privilege we've been given to share Christ with a world that truly needs him, and only when we begin to minister to those people for their sake (rather than for our sake), will the exodus be reversed.

Duncan Cameron,
Scarborough, Ont.

After reading the *Presbyterian Record* for the past few months, I am compelled to write in response to a recurring theme: the shrinking membership of the Presbyterian Church. Having grown up in the United Church and spending years worshipping God in various Baptist, Mennonite, Pentecostal and Presbyterian churches, I think I have a glimpse of one obstacle facing the Presbyterian Church.

Christian churches have difficulty when they try to be culturally relevant (politically correct) and true to the Spirit of God at the same time. It is tempting to dress up our social activism in spiritual terms so as to be seen as relevant in our modern/postmodern world. The church needs to stop looking at society as its source of inspiration and start looking at the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). We need to offer Jesus to those who do not know him as their Saviour. If we believe the gospel the church has taught throughout the centuries, and do not regard it as a religious myth, then we believe the salvation of the world is through Jesus Christ. We have good news and truth to tell those who are irreligious or of other religions.

When people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, the church will grow. In all the years I have worshipped and in all the churches I have attended, I have never seen membership drop in a church that is faithful to Christ's great commission (Matthew 28:19-20). When the shepherds care about the spiritual needs of their flock, the church grows; when they care more about their social status and how they are perceived in the world, the church shrinks.

Earl Siebold,
Edmonton

Culture critic misses important point

I am writing in response to Andrew Faiz's September column on *The Matrix*. I believe this "keen critic of popular culture" missed an important point. The movie was not called *Neo Anderson*, *New Son of Man* or *Kung-Fu Jesus*; rather, its title named a *system* — a system that has many parallels in Western society.

We live in a world where "salvation" is purchased at the local shopping mall/consumer cathedral, where we're bombarded by messages that tell us to take and own what we're entitled to (shopping is becoming known as "retail therapy") and not to mind the ecological or soul-damaging consequences of our massive tendencies to consume. We live in a world where sin is found in systems and institutions, so why not call them a matrix as the film does?

The film begs the question of how we are to live faithfully as Christians when we can't remove ourselves from "the matrix." We must live and move in it for our faith to be truly alive. It begs us to ask ourselves what exactly is influencing our lives and forming our reality in the world that Jesus died for. What is systemic sin and how do we wake up to it?

Looking closely at the social and economic systems of this world that we generally tend not to question is in no way "Christianity-lite." Part of the genius of *The Matrix* is that it uses what's cool in pop culture to deliver this very subversive message. If indeed *The Matrix* is advocating any kind of heroism, it's a discipleship that is aware and engaged.

The Matrix is a film that challenges us to discipleship — leather pants, a "babe" that "kicks butt" and all.

Rev. Jennifer MacDonald,
Stillwater, N.S.

Same-sex? Different opinions

The Bible provides clear teachings about same-sex relationships in both New and Old Testaments. Every Christian should study the whole Bible. Many are familiar with bits here and there and are unaware they are omitting much that is important and not to be neglected. Our wisdom is culture-bound and, in many cases, contrary to God's Word.

Myrtle Macdonald,
Chilliwack, B.C.

What a relief to see such a well-reasoned discussion of the same-sex marriage issue in a Presbyterian publication (October editorial)! The irrational intolerance of gays and lesbians in committed rela-

tionships has long been a source of deep concern to us. We sincerely hope the unusually silent "liberal ministers and theologians" you mention in your editorial will respond to your challenge.

*Lynn and John Stenabaugh,
Aurora, Ont.*

Mr. Harris says (October editorial) Presbyterian youth from CY2003 regard same-sex marriage in society as an "obvious right" for gays and lesbians. These attitudes of youth have been interpreted as a sign society's views are changing. But they can also be interpreted as youthful views that will change as the young people mature.

Christian thought throughout the ages (and the teaching of other major religions) has opposed homosexual behaviour. It is a sin that should not be condoned. No one has the "right" to sin. Christians believe the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God. While atheists and agnostics like to debate that, Christians accept it and try to live by it. To debate God's Word or to argue against any part puts all of it in question and leaves us with nothing to cling to.

Canadians take pride in being tolerant, but others see us as wimps who will stand for nothing. We are like the grass, bowing to whichever way the wind blows. It is time for Presbyterians to take note of this attack on Christianity and speak up for what they believe, rather than blindly accepting someone's concept of what is politically correct.

*W. Slimmon,
Calgary*

I was very disturbed by the October editorial. How could you devote a page and a half to critiquing those who oppose same-sex marriage by using a number of their secondary arguments without a single mention of the major reason: the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments oppose such unions? The only reference to Scripture you make is a casual and misleading statement that "the Bible has little to say on the subject and what is there is not so easily understood." The strange thing to me is that, from my reading of

various commentaries and church histories, there was no disagreement as to what was meant until those who were interested in promoting their own purposes began to reinterpret those Scriptures.

I must confess I come from an earlier generation of ministers trained to seek the meaning of Scripture by studying the Greek and Hebrew originals and by using the methods of historical-critical interpretation. It would appear the Scriptures no longer set the agenda for church policies; rather, we allow the world to determine what must be at the forefront of our discussions.

You also state that "most of the participants of CY2003 this summer who were interviewed by the *Record* said ... they regarded same-sex marriage in society as an obvious right for gays and lesbians." That argument has little weight. We must recognize that, because of the secular humanist nature of our educational system, the youth were probably echoing what they have been taught in school and, incidentally, demonstrating the lack of teaching in their local churches — although they *did* say "they were uncomfortable with same-sex marriage in the church."

*Rev. Ed Smith,
Lindsay, Ont.*

I am one step closer to leaving the Presbyterian Church. As an active member and elder, I am appalled the *Record* would print a letter (November) such as Liz Campbell's.

The fact that we don't marry homosexuals is not why we are in decline; it's because our members don't know Jesus in a personal way. They've heard of Jesus but are not convinced he is the Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man — one of the Holy Trinity. No other god or spiritual leader past, present or future can save anyone. I am surprised Ms. Campbell can say with conviction that "homosexuality is not a lifestyle choice" and yet state that "there is no foolproof test to show that Christ is the only way to salvation."

I don't believe the church should turn away homosexuals, liars, adulterers,

(continued on page 46)

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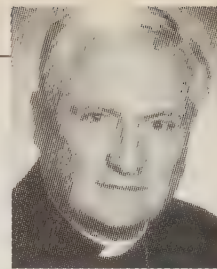
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Letting our light shine

Every day we must live our baptism

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me ...” This is the first line of a Christmas song that sounds like a nonsense rhyme, but it may date from the 16th century when it was used to teach the central features of the Christian faith. The “11 pipers piping” in the song symbolize the 11 faithful disciples of Jesus.

January 6, the 12th day of Christmas, is the first day of the season of Epiphany on the Christian calendar. Epiphany comes from a Greek word that means “revealing” or “showing faith” and celebrates Jesus being revealed to the non-Hebrew world — represented by the Wise Men who paid homage and presented gifts to the child Jesus. Long ago, the church chose this incident in Jesus’ life to celebrate and emphasize the breadth of the Christian gospel and to lift up the mandate of the community of faith received in baptism.

William H. Willimon has written: “Baptism is our consecration ... our ordination into the priesthood of Christ, each Christian’s commissioning to share in Christ’s work in the world. What is that work? At a very early date, the church began giving a lighted candle to the newly baptized with the words, ‘You are the light of the world. Let your light shine!’ The work of the Christian is primarily evangelistic work. At your baptism you are set apart that you, ‘a royal priesthood, God’s own people may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9). Baptism is a once-and-for-all event which takes our whole life to finish. Every day we must live our baptism. Every day we must respond to God’s gracious gifts in our lives.” That response includes being bearers of good news, canals of faith, hope, and love, and models and promoters of integrity, fair-



David Pandy-Szekeres, Sonya Henderson and Brian Johnston, Presbyterian staff working in the region of Hungary, Romania and Ukraine.

ness and peace. In short, we are missionaries, descendants of those early disciples whom the song calls “pipers.”

John Stott describes mission as “all that the church is sent into the world to do; it is Christian service comprising both evangelism and social action.” One of our subordinate standards, *Living Faith*, puts it this way: “As God sent Christ to us, so Christ sends us into the world. We are here to proclaim Christ in word and deed.”

During the Epiphany season, most churches will give attention to the mission of the Christian community as they plan for and hold their annual congregational meetings. No doubt, there will be a reviewing of mission activity in 2003 and an affirmation for what is to be undertaken through 2004. What variety there is in the ways Presbyterians are fulfilling the mission of the Christian church in the congregation and in the community: programs for telling — and retelling — the story of God’s sustaining grace and constant presence, for hospitality and compassion, for Christian nurture and fellowship, for meeting the needs of those who are on the margins of our commu-

nities, for promoting fairness and mutual respect, and for encouraging all to make careful use of the resources of the Earth.

There will also be time given to address support for Presbyterians Sharing. Sessions will ask their congregations to accept an allocation for the work of our national church. Brochures and other resources available from the national office will reveal what is being undertaken through our theological colleges, national boards and committees, the Assembly Council, and through Canada Ministries and International Ministries.

Each year the assembly Moderator is invited to visit one of the areas where International Ministries staff work with partner churches. In September 2003, my spouse, Chris, Rev. Dr. Ronald Wallace (newly appointed associate secretary for International Ministries) and I visited Hungarian Reformed churches in Hungary, Romania and the western part of Ukraine. We also met with four Presbyterian staff in that region: Sonya Henderson, who teaches English in a seminary in Romania and works with handicapped people; Brian Johnston, who teaches English and directs a male voice choir at

the same seminary; Steve Ross, in Ukraine, who assists with the work of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the church schools; and David Pandy-Szekeres, the supervisor of mission, general director of schools, and public relations officer for the Reformed Church of the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine.

We were warmly received by staff and the folk of the Hungarian Reformed churches wherever we went. These churches face a variety of significant challenges. In Romania, for example, the minority Hungarians endure discriminatory practices by municipal and national governments. Though promises were made about 13 years ago that schools would be returned to the churches, the church will not get them all back for 250 years at the current rate of return!

In my February column, I will relate other impressions gathered during this tour. Meanwhile, I invite you, in this season and throughout the year, to pray for our four staff members and for our brothers and sisters in the Hungarian Reformed churches in those three countries as they seek to live out the meaning of their baptism in the face of difficult circumstances.

At your annual meeting and beyond, remember your baptism — your calling to be a disciple, marching to the beat of a different Drummer, and to be the hands, feet, ears, eyes and arms of Christ in the world.

May God continue to guide you and enrich your spirituality in the new year of 2004!

Sandy Mc Donald

Moderator's itinerary

January 11

First Sackville, Lower Sackville, N.S.

January 24

Anniversary dinner
Glenview, Toronto

January 25

Knox, Woodstock, Ont.

January 26-27

Church leaders,
Canadian Council of Churches,
Mississauga, Ont.

January 28

The Presbyterian College, Montreal

Hope for the future

Photo: MNEC, 2003



Children practising their reading, writing and arithmetic at after-school tutoring classes arranged with the support of the Madurai Non-Formal Education Centre in India, a partner of PWS&D.

How can parents help their child with homework if they don't know how to read and write themselves?

That is the challenge that many parents in Madurai, India, face as they send their children to school for the very first time. PWS&D's partner, the Madurai Non-Formal Education Centre, is helping parents by organizing after-school tutoring classes in many communities. The classes make learning fun and help the children succeed in their studies. The end results are less school drop-outs and more opportunities for youth in the future. A brighter future for children is a brighter future for everyone.

These programs happen only because of your support. Please give generously to PWS&D.

PWS&D's relief and development programs operate because people and congregations financially support the work. PWS&D receives no funds from *Presbyterians Sharing*.... Support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) help make your gift go a long way.

For more information or to make a donation, write or call:

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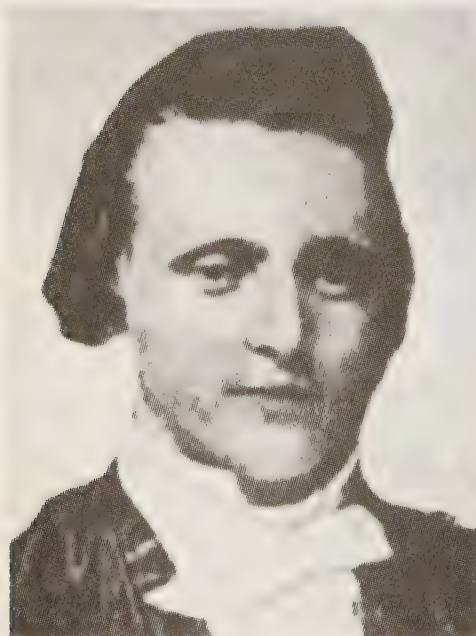
Please make your cheque payable to PWS&D

Americans split on gay unions — poll

A *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup poll has found that 48 per cent of Americans say gay unions would change society for the worse and 50 per cent say it would either improve society or have no effect. The young are more inclined to see gay unions as benign. Churchgoers are more likely to oppose gay unions — 67 per cent of those who attend weekly and 51 per cent who attend at least once a month say they are opposed. Among those who never go to church, 72 per cent say gay unions would have no negative effect. There's almost a three-way tie, however, on the issue of whether gay couples should have legal parity with heterosexual couples: 35 per cent oppose the idea, 32 per cent approve and 32 per cent say it doesn't matter to them.

USA Today

They prefer chicken now



Thomas Baker in 1867.

When Thomas Baker, a 19th-century missionary, sailed to the Pacific island of Fiji to evangelize the natives, he was well received at first. But not knowing the local customs, he caused great offence by touching the head of a tribal chief. The tribe cannibalized Baker, eating every part of him, even his clothes. His boots were spared, however (perhaps because they were as tough as leather), and are on display in a museum in Suva, Fiji's capital. The Fijian tribe has felt a curse was placed upon it because of

its deed; so, 136 years after Baker's death, the tribe has invited his descendants to a ceremony designed to lift the curse. The tribe has assured the missionary's descendants they have nothing to fear — Fijians have converted to either Christianity or Hinduism, and this tribe gave up cannibalism long ago. "These days we prefer chicken," one official said.

Daily Mirror

Congregation seeks pictures of past ministers

This year, the congregation of Knox, Meaford, Ont., is celebrating 150 years of Presbyterianism there and is compiling a history book to mark the occasion. The church has found pictures of 22 of the 29 ministers and students who have served the community over the years. It is appealing for help in finding portraits or photos of six elusive pastors. They are: James Kennedy, student minister in 1850 and 1852; John Gauld, minister, 1863-1872; Mr. Paterson, a student in 1872 (there was a James T. Paterson 10 years later, but it is unknown if this is the same man); Edward Bayne Rodgers, 1879-1881; Ashley T. Colter, 1886-1888; and Robert Barbour, 1912-1922. Anyone who might be able to help the congregation in its search is asked to contact Joel Jongkind at (tel.) 519-538-5511, or (fax) 519-538-1550, or e-mail the church at knox.presbyterian@on.aibn.com.

Assembly Council meets

The fall meeting of Assembly Council took place at Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch, Ont., Nov. 23-25. Included among the business items were two presentations: one by Dorothy Henderson, associate secretary, Education for Discipleship, on the progress of the document *Faithful Response: The Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Care of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults*; the other by Rev. Gordon Haynes, associate secretary, Canada Ministries, on the work of the Task Force on Healing and Reconciliation. (A more detailed report on the council meeting will appear in the February *Record*.)

Nominees for Moderator announced

The nominees for Moderator of the 130th General Assembly are: Rev. Richard Fee, executive director, Presbyterian World Service and Development, Toronto; Rev. Harry McWilliams, minister of Knox Church, Oakville, Ont.; Dr. Marjorie Ross, elder at Rosedale Church, Toronto, former associate secretary of International Ministries.




Former Presbyterian church floats to new home

A church built in Cape Breton, N.S., more than 125 years ago by Scottish Presbyterians has proven, not surprisingly, to be of solid construction after taking a three-day trip on Cape Breton's Bras d'Or Lakes to the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum in Iona. "It is in remarkably sound shape," museum director Rodney Chaisson told the *National Post*. "The people who built it definitely knew what they were doing." Built in 1874, Malagawatch Presbyterian Church came under the control of the United Church after Church

Union in 1925. Although unused for many years, it has been maintained and cared for by the United Church, which sold the building to the Highland Village Museum for \$1. Too wide for the narrow road bridges in rural Cape Breton, the church had to journey to its new home by barge. The cost of the move, which involved constructing a new wharf, hiring a tugboat, disconnecting telephone and power lines, and securing permits and other paperwork, totalled \$350,000.

Child poverty far from eliminated in Canada, report says

A report released in November by Campaign 2000 indicates that more than one million Canadian children and their families still live on low incomes. Formed in 1991, out of concern about the lack of government progress in achieving a 1989 all-party resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, the coalition has grown to become a network of more than 85 national, provincial and community partners. Its latest report reveals that, despite prosperous times and a poverty rate that is slowly descending (15.6 per cent based on 2001 numbers), even families with one or two working parents live in poverty. The Campaign 2000 report emphasizes that economic growth alone will not eliminate child poverty. The organization is calling for an enhanced child tax benefit, a federal and provincial commission to improve the availability of good jobs with living wages, a cross-Canada system of early childhood education and care services, and a strategy to increase affordable housing significantly.



Mate

*Congregation, national church
divided over employer top-up*

by Amy Sedlezky

Maternity leave — Who pays?

A congregation in southern Ontario wants the national church to stop paying top-up benefits to ministers who have babies and give the money saved to the minister's congregation to pay for housing for an interim minister.

The session of Knox, Waterdown, contends the Pension and Benefits Board's maternity leave policy is outdated, ineffective and unfair. Rev. Ryk Brown, minister at Aldershot Church in Burlington, Ont., and interim moderator at Knox, has been involved in the congregation's case since their minister, Rev. Susan Kerr, went on maternity leave a year ago. "When we try to apply outdated [church] legislation to the present context of a 12-month [federal] leave, we have complications," he said.

The board contends that its policies are fair and up to date. Judy Haas, senior administrator of the plan for the board, said the policy was reviewed and improved last year "and we're quite happy about it."

There's no denying it's a complicated issue, involving federal, provincial and church legislation.

Before women were allowed to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church, congregations had few concerns when ministers had children. The ministers were male, their wives had babies and usually the congregation delighted in supporting the family and the new baby. That there was no parental leave simplified matters even more because the church didn't have to think about filling the pulpit on Sundays, even if the minister spent a little more time at home with his wife and newborn.

In 1967, the Presbyterian Church approved the principle of women's ordination. A year later, when the first woman was ordained, the church took on a new endeavour that has had far-reaching effects. Not only did the decision enable women to preach and teach on the same level as men but, when federal legislation was eventually enacted to allow women in the workplace to take maternity leave, female ministers in the church were also entitled to this benefit.

It's a complicated issue, involving federal, provincial and church legislation

These changes took some time to take effect in the church. Even today, with only about 42 women under the age of 40 in congregational ministry, the issues surrounding maternity and parental leave are not well tested.

In June 2002, Susan Kerr of Knox Church in Waterdown told the church's session she was pregnant with her first child and would be taking the full year of maternity leave. (*See accompanying story on page 15.*)

The process of figuring out who pays for what benefits brought confusion, arguments and frustration to the session of Knox, the Presbytery of Hamilton and the Pension and Benefits Board. In 2003, the matter came to General Assembly and was referred to a committee, where it remains today.

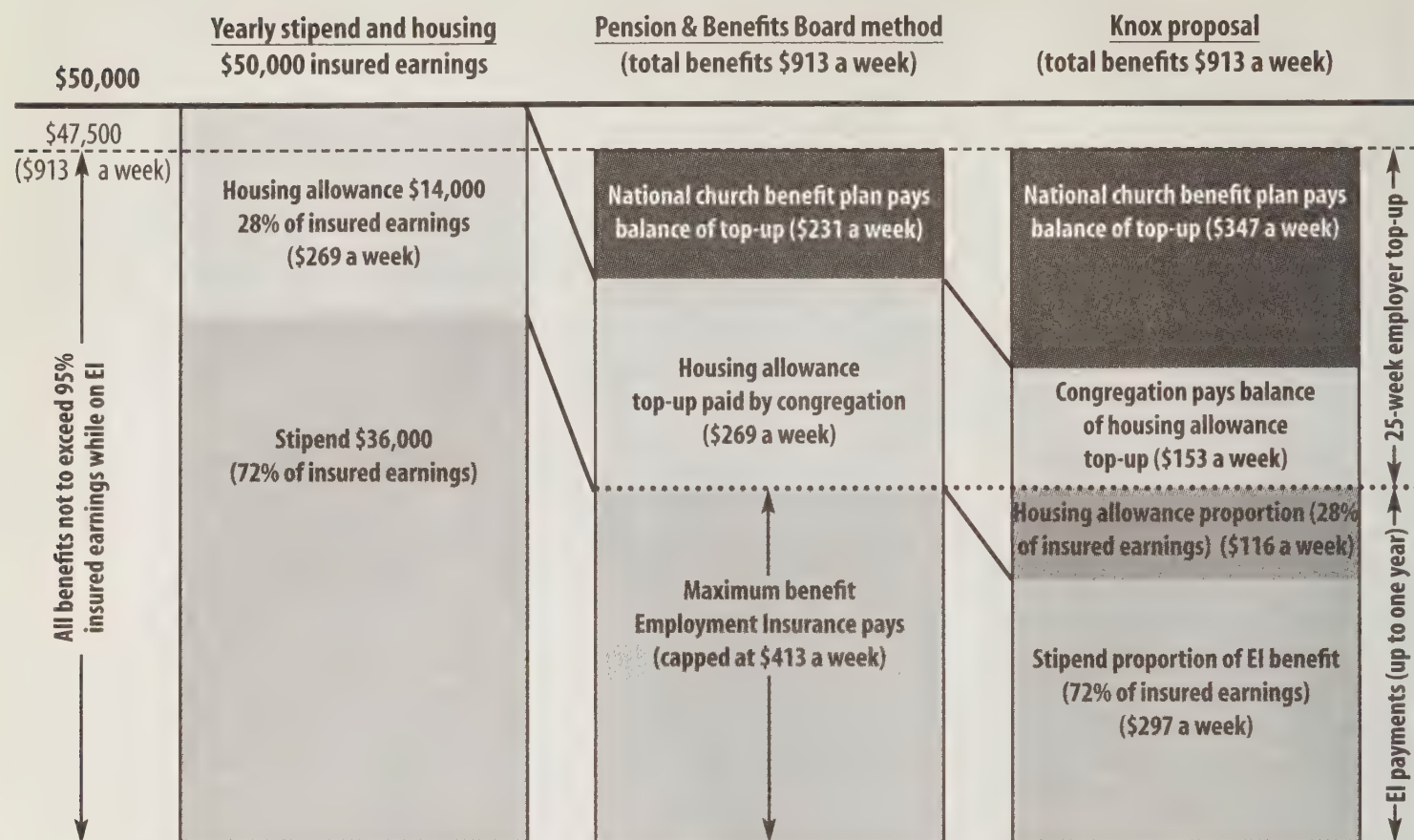
What the government says

Under federal legislation (Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code), a woman who has worked for an employer for six months is entitled to 17 weeks maternity leave (15 paid weeks, plus a two-week unpaid waiting period) plus 35 paid weeks of parental leave, which can be split between the mother and her partner. (This may be extended in the case of a medical emergency.) The year-long combined leave came into effect Dec. 31, 2000. Prior to that, the maximum leave was 35 weeks. For the 15 paid weeks of maternity leave, the mother receives federal Employment Insurance benefits equalling 55 per cent of her insurable earnings. The maximum insured amount is \$39,500 a year. EI collects premiums on those earnings from every employer and employee in Canada. (The same formula applies to an eligible parent who takes the 35 weeks of parental leave. Only one benefit is paid per household.) As an employer is not required to continue to pay any salary while a mother or parent is on leave, most women make do with the 55 per cent they receive from EI.

The employer's responsibilities

An employer of natural or adoptive parents must hold the employee's position open until the eligible leave is over. Although employers are not required to top up the employee's EI benefits, a number of employers do so. This varies widely outside the church. Several large pharmaceutical companies provide a two- to six-week top-up of an employee's salary while on leave. Others —

Calculating maternity top-up benefits



In this example, the minister receives an annual stipend of \$36,000 and a housing allowance of \$14,000. Employment Insurance's maximum payment of \$413 a week would apply. The Pension and Benefits Board says the congregation should pay the full housing allowance during the top-up period. The congregation of Knox Church, Waterdown, Ont., says since it has paid EI premiums on the housing allowance, what it pays toward the top-up should be proportionately reduced. Since housing is 28 per cent of total remuneration, 28 per cent of the \$413 EI payment should be deemed as contributing to the full housing allowance during the top-up period, reducing the congregation's housing allowance payments to \$153 a week. For simplicity, utilities have not been included.

like the Peel Board of Education in Ontario — do not top up a teacher's pay during maternity leave. A 2001/2002 survey, conducted by Watson Wyatt and distributed by the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, revealed about 20 per cent of Canadian companies with fewer than 500 employees provide a top-up. That rises to 53 per cent for companies with 1,000 or more employees. Parental benefit top-ups are rarer. Only five per cent of companies with under 500 workers provide a parental top-up; 11 per cent of companies with more than 1,000 employees provide this benefit.

The Presbyterian Church's pension and benefits plan provides a top-up to a maximum of 95 per cent of insurable earnings during the 15 weeks of paid maternity leave and 10 weeks of parental leave. For a minister, the government

calculates insurable earnings as stipend plus housing allowance or the fair rental equivalent if a manse is provided. Guy Smagghe, program coordinator for Central America and India with Presbyterian World Service and Development, recently finished a parental leave. He was more than pleased with the 10-week salary top-up the church's plan provided. "It's a set-up we should be proud of," he said. "The value of being able to spend time with your children, well, there are no words to describe it. It's such an important bonding time, so anything that facilitates that is praiseworthy — especially in a church context."

A discrepancy in the church

In the case of ministers with a housing allowance, however, a complication arises over who contributes how much to the top-up.

The application for top-up from the Pension and Benefits Board works this way. It asks the applicant to add stipend, housing allowance (or manse fair rental value) and utilities together. The applicant then calculates 95 per cent of the total and subtracts EI benefits (in most cases, this would be EI's maximum benefit of \$413 a week). From this subtotal, the applicant then subtracts the housing allowance and utilities. The balance left is what the national church benefits plan pays for the eligible weeks of the leave.

The congregation of Knox argues that subtracting the full housing allowance is the error. They contend that since EI premiums include the housing allowance, the insurance paid out from EI proportionately covers housing. So, if the housing allowance is \$14,000 a year, EI premiums have been paid on that. Since

(continued on page 16)

Church met announcement with jubilation

by Amy Sedlezky

When Rev. Susan Kerr, the new minister at Knox Church, Waterdown, Ont., told the church's session she was pregnant with her first child and would be taking a year off to care for the baby, she wasn't sure how the people would react. Besides the disruption in her ministry, it was the same month their beloved former minister, Rev. Chris Vais, died (June 2002) from the effects of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. To Mrs. Kerr's delight, her announcement was met with jubilation. "Their reaction was 'woo-hoo!' and they've been that way all along," she said. "They embraced it totally, right from the get-go."

Since Mrs. Kerr was already three months pregnant at the time of her announcement, there wasn't much time to find an interim minister. And although the congregation has since been wrestling with the complexities of a year-long leave and finding the funds to provide two housing allowances, Mrs. Kerr said the congregation "has been amazing." When Jessie was born in Jan. 2003, the congregation threw a party for the infant.

Jack Goodwin, an elder at Knox, said the session was "very, very pleased" for Mrs. Kerr and her husband, Andrew. "There wasn't any trepidation at all," he said. He added that session knew immediately it wanted an interim minister for the duration of the leave. "The worst thing is having a different minister every week. You lose direction. You need to have that continuity."

Rev. Judee Archer Green, clerk of the Presbytery of Hamilton, said, to her knowledge, this was the presbytery's first experience with a full year of maternity leave and admitted there are challenges that come with it. "We had some experience with someone taking a leave of absence for a year, so it wasn't totally foreign to us, but the financial arrangements are quite different with this," she said.

Appointed as interim moderator while Mrs. Kerr was away, Rev. Ryk Brown

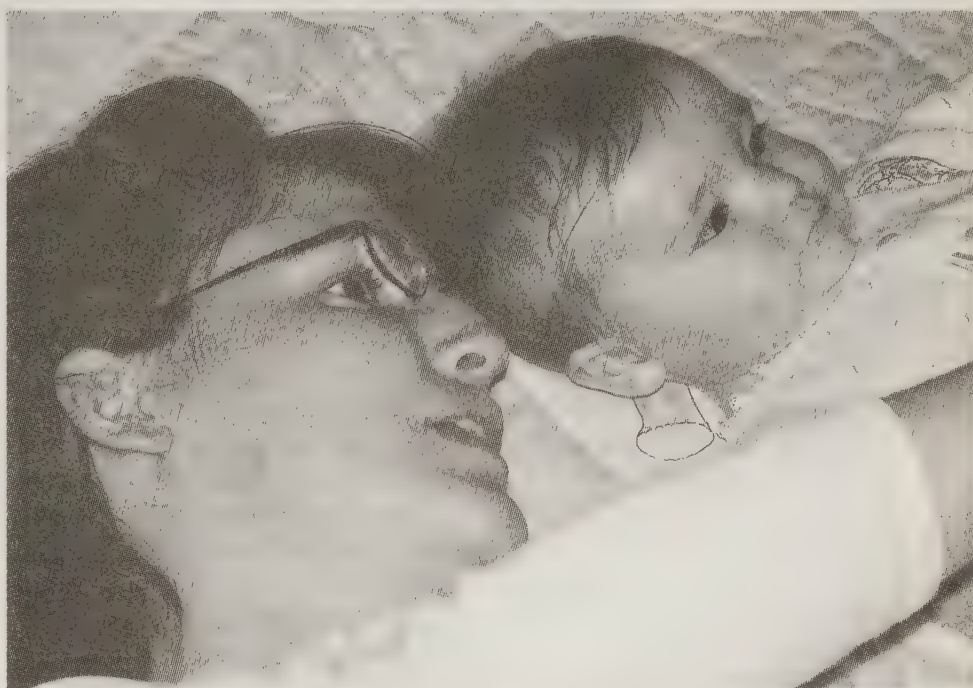


Photo by Andrew Kerr

Rev. Susan Kerr took a one-year maternity leave to care for her baby, Jessie.

stepped into a church that was glad to see a familiar face. A good friend of Mrs. Kerr and well known to the congregation, the minister of Burlington's Aldershot Church aided the decision to call Rev. Douglas duCharme to the post. Since Mr. duCharme comes from Toronto and was unknown to Knox, Mr. Brown provided a link between the congregation and its new minister. With his help, Mr. duCharme was freed for preaching, teaching and pastoral care — something Mr. Brown says is important to the congregation's well-being. "In my opinion and that of session, some kind of interim minister is essential. You can't leave the pulpit empty for 12 months without negative effects."

Inducted on Jan. 5, 2003, Mr. duCharme has trained specifically for this type of role. He held high hopes for the church and didn't waste any time getting started. He began a visioning process on how to carry the church forward. About four months along, "I realized we had a church in transition," he said. "They had gone from being a small, rural congregation to a suburban, urban church, but they hadn't accounted for

how they had grown over the years."

The loss of Dr. Vais and adjusting to leadership changes accounts for much of the congregation's hesitancy to move forward. "The congregation had to do some stock-taking," said Mr. duCharme. "They were finally ready to move on when Susan left." He added that calling an interim minister was a "profound decision" for the church to make, signifying they were ready to make changes and grow.

The congregation wanted the church to be a place for healing ministries, motivated by the pain of witnessing Dr. Vais's illness. To this end, the church has developed and implemented weekly healing and wholeness services to reach out to people in the community experiencing brokenness.

The congregation also had to account for its growth. "The congregation is much larger than one minister can handle without killing themselves," said Mr. duCharme. "Susan was working 70 hours a week but, now with her baby, she can't do that kind of sacrificial ministry."

On any given Sunday at Knox, two services attract 250 people. But the church

(continued on page 17)

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Employment Insurance pays 55 per cent of total insurable earnings to the maximum of \$413 a week, the congregation argues that the amount it pays toward housing for the eligible weeks of leave should be decreased by the amount EI is effectively paying toward housing. So, if the stipend is \$36,000 a year and housing is \$14,000 a year (\$270 a week), housing represents 28 per cent of total insurable earnings. Assuming a mother is on maternity and parental leave for at least the 25 weeks top-up benefits are available, Knox argues that instead of paying the full \$270 a week of housing allowance, the congregation's contribution to housing should be reduced by 28 per cent of the EI benefit (about \$116 in this case). As a result, instead of paying \$6,750 over the 25 weeks, the congregation would pay only \$3,850 — a saving of \$2,900.

Using Knox's method, the national church plan would contribute more to the minister's top-up than the board's method. (Where a manse is provided, the benefits plan contribution would be calculated as it is now, since a congregation obviously can't provide 45 per cent of a house.)

The session of Knox would like the Presbyterian Church's policy changed. It is sending an overture to the next General Assembly asking that the top-up be forfeited and the money saved in the benefits plan be put toward housing allowance for an interim minister.

It also wants the rules around the housing allowance clarified, pointing out that if a congregation is required to pay the full housing allowance, rather than paying the difference between EI's contribution and the full allowance, EI may — and apparently has in some cases — claw back some of its contribution.

A justice issue

The effects of a one-year maternity/parental leave extend beyond mere payments and benefits received. The session of Knox is worried about the well-being of female ministers of child-bearing age within the church. Because of the added burden of a second housing allowance, a congregation will be burdened each time the minister has a child. Session therefore wants to put policies in place to ease the burden on congregations so they will not hesitate to call younger women. "The

top-up is a very generous benefit but it's not necessary," said Mr. Brown. "It can be better used to assist the congregation in paying for its ministry needs for a year." He said the Hamilton presbytery would like to see a church's budget remain unchanged when a minister goes on maternity leave. "We want to see benefits and a support structure that is fair to the parent, to the congregation, and doesn't unduly burden our church as a whole."

The board's response

Judy Haas of pension and benefits says the board has done a lot of research in the past year and is creating new application forms, taking into account new legislation and how the various sources of benefits income work together. "Things needed to be revised," she said.

'We want to see benefits and a support structure that is fair to the parent, to the congregation, and doesn't unduly burden our church as a whole'

Rev. Ryk Brown

But the involved parties still don't see eye to eye. After the session and board argued back and forth and got nowhere, the Presbytery of Hamilton stepped in and helped present overtures and petitions to the 2003 General Assembly. The assembly declined to deal with the issue, referring the overture on maternity/parental leave policies to the board and the overture for a policy handbook to Assembly Council. A presbytery committee was appointed to resolve the dispute between presbytery and the board. They hope to come to a resolution before the next assembly. "Our responsibility is to make sure none of our parties is out of pocket," said Mr. Brown. "In my opinion, the congregation is left holding a bag that's in excess of \$10,000 — maybe \$15,000" if the congregation pays two full housing allowances.

Ms. Haas said problems can arise because of the many parties involved in governing the rules of maternity leave. And, ultimately, the pension board is not

responsible for making decisions about benefits. "We're driven by the General Assembly [and] also by [federal] legislation," she said. "It's not this office that makes the rules."

Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk at the assembly office, said congregations are aware of their responsibilities in providing for their clergy. "If they want to do things differently, the policy will have to change," he said.

A difference of opinion

It is unknown if an agreement will be reached shortly or if it will have to wait for the General Assembly to resolve the matter in June. Rev. Judee Archer Green, clerk of the Hamilton presbytery, said the committee was due to meet in December. "There are two sides, and we need to determine where the common ground is," she said. "There are different interpretations of legislation and policy. How can we bring them together?"

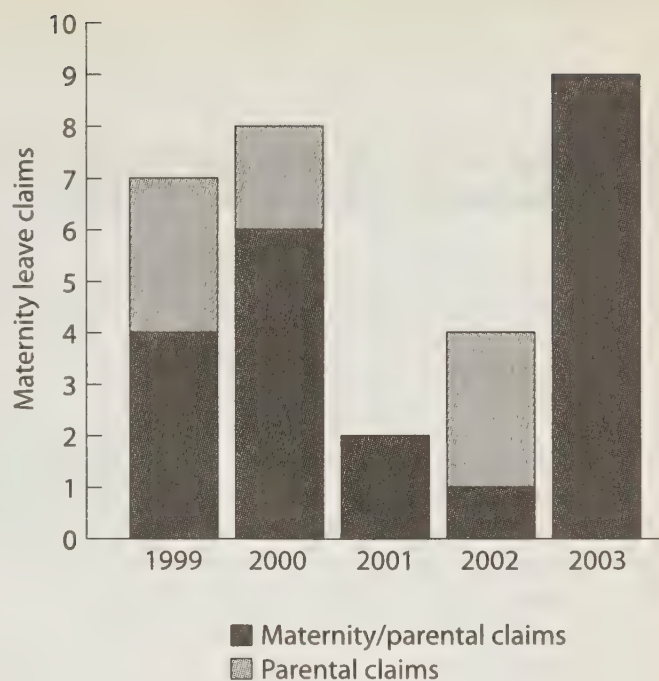
Having worked at the national office in the past, Ms. Archer Green knows the business of its employees and recognizes that this dispute came at a time when there was some staff turnover. "I think everybody has done a good job, but there is a learning curve, and this is fairly new legislation as far as the government is concerned and there are implications to that."

Jack Goodwin, an elder at Knox, admits the dispute has been unpleasant for the congregation. Having to pay two full housing allowances has been somewhat

of a concern, but he is optimistic about recovering from the strain it has put on the congregation's finances. He also recognizes the difficulty in deciding whether or not to call an interim minister during a leave. "It's a catch-22. We can't afford to but we can't afford not to," he said. "You still have to run it like a business and that could become difficult."

Rev. Harrold Morris, convener of the Pension and Benefits Board, hopes things can be resolved. He wouldn't comment on the Kerr case but said "there appears to be a difference in understanding of what the rules were. The fact that it's a relatively new issue and the change of the government giving permission to take a year of leave has implications that need to be looked at — and are being looked at."

Susan Kerr found the dispute exhausting and thinks an updated policy and new guidelines are needed. She said the interim ministry handbook assumes a vacancy due to sickness or a dissolved pastoral tie. "There are no guidelines for maternity leave. So the committee put together possible policies of the church



to adopt." She said the recommendations deal with ways to speed up the decision-making process and to clarify issues around housing allowance. She said efficiency is needed because of the short time frame available for any minister going on leave once she announces her pregnancy to session.

All the same, she said, "you couldn't ask for a better community to do this with. They kept saying: 'We're just groundbreaking. We'll get through it.' And we'll get through it by the grace of the congregation and the grace of God. And I hope things come around so it's easier for the next person." **R**

(continued from page 15)

is only staffed to serve a maximum of about 120. Already in need of increased resources, the demand will only heighten as the church serves a community that is expected to double in the next 15 years. To bring the congregation into the present and help them look to the future, a task force was created to look after staffing and resources. Mrs. Kerr is fully aware of and optimistic about the new direction.

Being a regular church member now is giving Mrs. Kerr a different perspective of church life. She said she has the opportunity to relate to people differently and to be part of the congregation in a new way. She participates in the Moms Bible

Study group and sits in the pew on Sunday mornings. Her time off has also made her realize that things can get done without her constant help. "I've realized how replaceable ministers are!" she joked.

As the leave draws to an end, the congregation is starting to move toward closure. "It's quite unnatural," said Mr. duCharme, who recognizes the intimate relationship that has formed between the congregation and himself. "It's like living with someone for 12 months and then saying, 'I've got to leave.'"

Feelings are mixed at Knox at this time of transition. "We're anxious to have our Susan back," said Mr. Good-

win. "But on the other hand, we're going to miss Doug."

The position in the pulpit will be ceremonially returned to Mrs. Kerr in January — just as it was handed to Mr. duCharme one year ago. Keys to the building, a Bible and communion vestments — the symbols of office and ministry — will change hands one more time at Knox.

"It has been an interesting sabbatical for the congregation," said Mr. duCharme. "The congregation has continued to be fully operational and has been able to look afresh, do some planning for the future and account for where it has arrived on its journey." **R**

Church, government look for kinder way to resolve residential school claims

by Amy Sedlezky

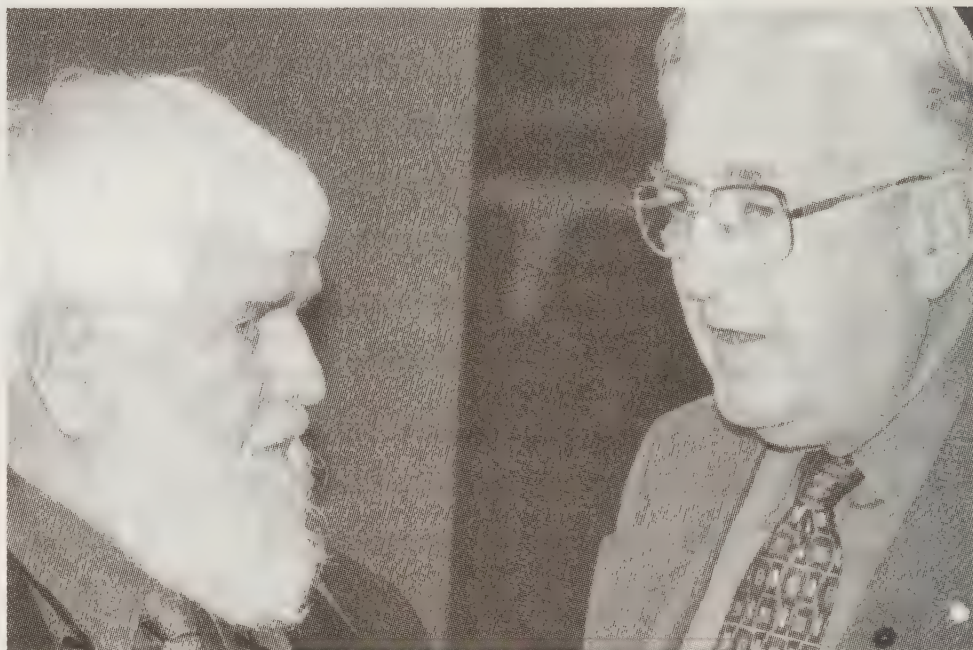
The federal government and the churches involved in settling abuse lawsuits from former residents of Indian residential schools hope a newly announced process will help speed up the resolution of more than 12,000 outstanding claims.

"This is one aspect in a journey toward healing and, hopefully, toward resolution," said Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk of the Presbyterian Church. "Hopefully it will resolve litigation in a kinder way so that other things can happen and so that some of our programs will bear more fruit."

The Alternative Dispute Resolution process for native claims against residential schools was formally launched in Ottawa on Nov. 6 by the Hon. Ralph Goodale, the minister responsible for Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada. According to Mr. Kendall, the option "provides a safer, quicker and less costly alternative to court."

Developed in consultation with former students, claimants' lawyers and churches, the main difference is claims will be heard privately by independent adjudicators chosen by a committee. The adjudicators are subject to the chief adjudicator, the Hon. Ted Hughes, who was appointed in June. Mr. Hughes has a wealth of experience with high-profile issues as he was the presiding member of the APEC inquiry and the chief federal negotiator of land claims in British Columbia. He is also a former judge of the Court of Queen's Bench in Saskatchewan.

ADR is often preferred in such situations over litigation, which is costly in time and money and can cause more distress to victims who have to relive their experiences of abuse and ill-treatment —



Rev. Ian Morrison (left), general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, speaks with the Hon. Ted Hughes, the chief adjudicator for out-of-court settlements with former students of Indian residential schools, at a news conference in Ottawa, Nov. 6.

something that disrupts healing. "Anything that sets up an adversarial situation, where people have to relive the pain, hurts healing more than helping it," said Rev. Gordon Haynes, associate secretary of Canada Ministries.

However, it is up to claimants whether to opt for ADR. Even if they do choose it and the mediator fixes an award, the plaintiff can still opt to sue for loss of language and culture through the court system — a stipulation made after certain parties expressed concern that this would not be allowed. The federal government has now proposed a new form of release that would permit plaintiffs to sue for loss of their own language and culture.

At its meeting in November, Assembly Council passed a motion empowering the council convener, the principal clerk of General Assembly and the

trustee board to accept the new form of release, provided appropriate language be added to the settlement agreement that would: (a) restrict third-party claims against the church by the government relating to language and culture; (b) add a sixth criterion that will recognize the church's acceptance of a partial release by a plaintiff as a gesture of good faith in any other negotiations with the government. A section of the settlement agreement with Ottawa provides a number of criteria upon which negotiations with the government will be based should the need to pay compensation to plaintiffs for loss of language and/or culture arise. At present, no court in Canada currently recognizes language and culture damage as a legitimate cause for litigation. Furthermore, the federal government has said it is prepared to fight any claims for language and culture loss.

There were about 130 residential schools in Canada run by the government and the Presbyterian, Anglican, United and Roman Catholic churches. The last school closed in Saskatchewan in 1996. The Presbyterian Church is responsible for the fewest number of claims (approximately 150 claimants, most related to the Birtle residential school in Manitoba). In Feb. 2003, the church signed an agreement with the federal government to compensate victims at Birtle as well as the Cecilia Jeffrey school in Kenora, Ont. Seventy per cent of the compensation for verified cases, whether through the ADR or the courts, will be provided by the federal government and 30 per cent by the church to a maximum of \$2.1 million.

The church has been involved in resolutions since the government initiated possible alternatives four years ago and it will continue to play a role in this process. "We have indicated a commitment of being present whenever we are invited by claimants, so we will be there to listen and for acts of commemoration," said Mr. Kendall. "If claims are validated through this process, our settle-

ment fund will provide compensation to ensure the claimant will receive 100 per cent and, where a claim is validated, we will offer an apology in person."

The Canada Ministries division of the church has been working on healing and reconciliation between the church and Native peoples for several years. In 1998,

With the new ADR option, most claims could be settled within seven years, rather than 50

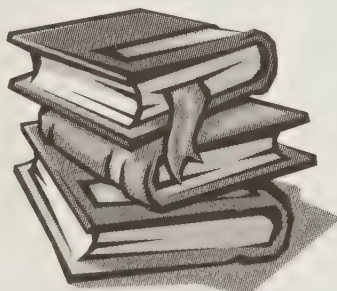
\$500,000 was set aside for programs that would promote this endeavour. The new ADR process helps further this goal. According to Mr. Haynes, "Healing needs to begin before reconciliation can really happen, so anything that leads us down the road to getting the healing started helps.

Mr. Haynes, along with Lou Ford, a member of the Task Force on Healing

and Reconciliation, told the Assembly Council that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of achieving healing and reconciliation. The First Nations people are a diverse group. The vision of the task force, Mr. Haynes said, is: "Healing and reconciliation can be achieved through relationships based on trust, awareness and understanding between people of the church and aboriginal people, resulting in lasting partnerships through concrete projects with measurable results." The most important factor in achieving this vision is education, Mr. Haynes stated. "People need to be aware of the hurt and damage caused by the residential school system and of the need for healing and reconciliation.

The Presbyterian Church was represented at the Ottawa press conference by Rev. Ian Morrison, general secretary of the church's Life and Mission Agency. He has been intimately involved in the negotiations. It is hoped that, with the new ADR option, most claims will be settled within the next seven years — rather than the 50 years it could take if all claims went through the courts. **R**

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"Shaping Transformational Church Leaders"

Stewardship conference links money to mission

by Amy Sedlezky

Talking about money is often seen as taboo in the church," said Annemarie Klassen, associate secretary of stewardship and education for mission at national church offices. "It's a very private thing and, because we don't talk about it, we don't see the power it has in our lives and in our congregations."

As one of the creators of Stewards by Design, a national conference that brings together Presbyterian ministers, leaders and congregation members to learn how to be good stewards of God's gifts, Ms. Klassen said encouraging dialogue about money is one of her goals. "Jesus talked about our relationship to our money and our possessions almost more than anything else. Perhaps it reflects what a sacred place we tend to give money in our lives."

Rev. Dr. Jeff Loach of St. Andrew's, Windsor, Ont., who recently formed a stewardship team at his church, agrees. "Jesus was concerned about money, so I think the church needs to be equally so."

Renewed for the third time since it began in 1999, the biennial conference was different this year for two reasons: there were two conferences, and one was held outside Ontario for the first time. Each conference had a different focus. The Rocky Mountains in Canmore, Alta., was host to the first conference Oct. 24 to 27. Faithful Giving ... Abundant Living was for congregations hoping to increase their giving. A second conference, Enduring Gifts ... Enduring Witness, held in Jacksons Point, Ont., from Oct. 31 to Nov. 3, was for congregations that already had a large sum of money and needed to know how best to use it.

The main message of keynote speaker Kennon Callahan was constant at both conferences and left a deep impression

on those who attended. His idea of "money follows mission" addressed the need of linking money with the church's vision and ministry. Participants were encouraged to develop their mission first and then think about the money needed to follow through with their vision. They learned that, too often, congregations do things in the reverse order with poor results.



Paul Gardiner of St. James' Church, Stouffville, Ont., speaks at the Stewards by Design event in Jacksons Point, Ont.

Motivation behind the money

"There are some congregations who have millions and some who have \$75,000," said Ms. Klassen. "When and how do you use it? What do you use it for? Callahan says you grow it but, at the same time, you need to be doing ministry. The whole reason for giving is mission and ministry and, when people see that, the money will grow. They will see that their money will make a difference."

Discussing money is one of the first steps to using it wisely. Rev. Kristine O'Brien of Trafalgar Church, Oakville, and convener of the Ontario conference has little difficulty talking about money — something she said stems from her younger age and that of the congregation. However, she recognizes it isn't easy for everyone and is a practice the conference can encourage. "My generation has car loans, mortgages, credit cards. We don't seek the security of a big nest egg. Money is not our most valuable commodity — time is," she said. "So this opens the door for conversation between the older generation, who may think the church and money don't go together, and the younger generation, who think it does."

Rev. Shaun Seaman brought a team for the second time. After attending the inaugural conference in 1999, the congregation of Trinity Church in Kanata, Ont., doubled its giving; so he was anxious to build upon what his team already learned. For Mr. Seaman it was a powerful and spiritual event. "I wasn't anticipating that at all," he said. "I didn't see stewardship as a spiritual thing, but now I see it as nothing but that. The change in our approach and our theology of giving was tremendous."

Exciting possibilities

The one-on-one meetings provided by Mr. Callahan were appreciated by many. "It stimulated so much excitement in terms of possibilities to bring back to the congregation that were bigger, more challenging and more exciting than we would have thought of on our own," said Mr. Seaman. "It's applicable and valuable to every congregation in so many practical ways. It should be a required activity for every congregation."



The planning team for the Stewards by Design event held in Canmore, Alta.

This sensible, hands-on approach to teaching the value of stewardship was helpful to many. Rev. Mark Richardson of Kitchener East Church in Ontario went to the Canmore conference thinking it would be a great opportunity to learn, grow and help his church in the next stage of its journey. "We've been recognizing more and more that stewardship is not about money, which has been the emphasis here since we're a new church plant," he said. "The elders have really been wanting to expand our mission to our community and the world. This is the work that God has called us to do."

The practical advice and concrete examples given by Mr. Callahan made sense to his listeners. An advocate of Mr. Callahan's work for over a decade, Rev. Dr. Rick Horst, minister at St. Mary's, Ont., already started an endowment fund in 1995 loosely based on Mr. Callahan's principles. Dr. Horst's team made "quantum leaps" during the private consultation with Mr. Callahan. "It sharpened our vision and gave us tremendous enthusiasm and a plan to concretely move forward," he said.

Team spirit

About 100 congregations have been through the Stewards by Design conferences since they began. One of the aspects of the conference — and something participants seem to like best — is the use of teams. Twenty-five congregations were represented at each conference in 2003 with teams of four people

— the church's minister and three church members. The motivation behind the teams is to make it easier for participants to bring their ideas and enthusiasm back to the congregation rather than leaving the task to one person.

Teams were given a plan to help develop strategies for sharing ideas with their congregations. Mr. Callahan told the teams to present their ideas in stages

God has greatly blessed his church, and this is reason to bless others

— sharing their experience with the congregation, meeting as a group to develop concrete ideas they can implement easily, then meeting with session and the stewardship committee. He advised them to focus on two of their strengths, rather than worrying about weaknesses.

Remembering God's grace

Being the minister of a new church in New Minas, N.S., Rev. Tim Archibald is always looking for his congregation's strengths and how to use them best. He took a team to the Canmore conference with the goal of rising to the challenges of being a new church. The positive outlook he found there was especially encouraging. Too often, he said, discussions about money and other important issues are negative and disempowering, so to attend a

nationally sponsored event that was energetic and uplifting was refreshing. "We have to be confident in God's providence and faithfulness," he said. "We are people of abundance, not scarcity."

That God has greatly blessed his church and this is reason to bless others through the gifts God has provided was highlighted often at both conferences. Rev. Graham Kennedy of Knox, St. Catharines, Ont., said the conference made participants think about developing the right motivation for encouraging people to give. "It's the best conference I've ever been to. It was just marvellous," he said. "I would go to any congregation and say, 'You're missing the chance of a lifetime. Go to one of these things.'"

Along with Mr. Callahan's wisdom, participants were treated to outstanding worship, team-building, a spirituality centre and tireless work from the organizers. Even with all the positive experiences, practical knowledge and excitement gained from the Stewards by Design conferences, bringing the church together in fellowship, worship and friendship is one of the biggest benefits. "The most important aspect was congregations coming together and sharing stories," said Ms. Klassen. "Being inspired and inspiring each other."

"It was a life-changing experience for us," said Mr. Richardson. "It really opened our eyes and hearts to the incredible size and wonder and beauty of God's mission. It's not about the building or money. It's about people." **R**

Reports from the synods

B.C. does more than clown around

When it was announced that two clowns would be the guest speakers at the 112th synod meetings, held Oct. 17-19 at St. David's Church, Kelowna, some within the synod replied, "So what else is new?" In three presentations, Harry and Larry, a clown duo from Prince George, entertained and energized what can easily devolve into an attitude of business only. Through Harry and Larry's search for joy, members of the synod were invited to look at their own lives and remember that joy comes from the knowledge of Jesus' love for each of us.

The synod listened as well to presentations from: members of the mobile vacation Bible school, hosted by a number of congregations in the Presbytery of Kamloops; participants at Canada

Youth 2003; the director of Camp Douglas; two of the ministers and the representative elder from the Cariboo Ministries; Keith Knight, communications director for the national church; and Ellen Rae Dai who, along with her husband, Dr. Peikang Dai, operate a health care facility in China.

The synod also grappled with some longstanding matters. The creation of a third staff position with responsibility for youth has again been referred to the executive to report back next October. And the Presbytery of Western Han Ca's equal partnership in all matters of the synod continues to be worked through.

Rev. Robert Kerr, minister of St. Columba, Parksville, was named moderator.

Atlantic Provinces emphasizes importance of Camp Geddie

The connection of Camp Geddie to the work of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces was underscored when the synod spent an afternoon meeting at the camp during the court's 130th annual meeting Oct. 20-22. While the camp has a vigorous summer program involving hundreds of campers, it also has a growing number of educational, worship and leadership events during the year. It was probably not a coincidence that the synod elected as its moderator Rev. Dr. Donald W. MacKay, synod staff worker, who spends half of his work time on the Camp Geddie program. The host congregation for the meeting, St. Andrew's Church in New Glasgow, N.S., is about a half-hour drive from the camp.

The highlight of the annual meeting is often the theme speaker. This year's meeting broke with tradition and featured three speakers. First was Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Johnston, whose visit to synod coincided with his attendance at the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History meeting in nearby Pictou to mark the 200th anniversary of the arrival in Canada of education pioneer Rev. Dr. Thomas McCulloch. Dr. Johnston spoke of the lighthearted newspaper columns Dr. McCulloch wrote from 1821 to 1822. The second speaker was Rev. Kenneth Stright, coordinator of the FLAMES Year of Spirituality. And Kim Arnold, national church archivist and records administrator, spoke to members of synod about the importance of good record-keeping and record storage for future historians.



Clowns Larry and Harry led the Synod of British Columbia in a search for joy.

Quiet, efficient meeting for Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

The 119th meeting of the Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario took place at First Church, Portage la Prairie, Man., Oct. 24-25. A low turnout, caused primarily by a conflicting event, did not prevent the synod from taking care of business on the first day — electing Rev. Sydney Chang as moderator and dealing with other matters.

On the second day, Rev. Dr. Jack Fortin, executive director of Centered Life — Centered Work, a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's Luther Seminary in Minneapolis, addressed the synod. Workshops were held in the morning and afternoon on the topic *The Changing Face of the Congregation's Mission: What can we do better inside the sanctuary to carry God's love outside the sanctuary?*

Commissioner-based meetings begin in Toronto-Kingston

The big news coming from the 129th Synod of Toronto and Kingston was the shift to a commissioner-based meeting and the placing of training and social events outside the synod meeting venue. The year ahead will be a period of transition for the synod as it adjusts to a new way of doing its work.

The synod, which met Oct. 20-21 at Hopedale Church, Oakville, continues to be involved in camping ministry. A special commission on the future of camp ministry has been established to examine all aspects of this work within the synod's bounds.

The synod continued to give encouragement to the Presbytery of Temiskaming as it establishes a regional ministry.

Rev. Will Ingram, minister of Morningside-High Park, Toronto, was elected moderator.



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African church conference joins initiative to combat HIV/AIDS

YAOUNDE, CAMEROON — Population Services International, a non-profit marketing organization based in Washington, D.C., has launched a new initiative with the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Circle of African Women Theologians to help curb the spread of HIV/AIDS on the continent. Under AIDSMark, a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development, faith-based organizations such as the African conference's member churches across the continent are to deliver messages about prevention as well as providing spiritual and social support for those living with and affected by the virus.

"Your churches provide a significant portion of health care and social services in your home countries," Michael Magan, director of USAID's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, told the conference's eighth General Assembly meeting in December in Yaounde, Cameroon's capital. "One of the great advantages that you have is that you are located in every corner of Africa, and this allows you to reach portions of the population that your local governments cannot," Magan said.

Pauline Muchina, a Kenyan who is a coordinator at AIDSMark, said basic training of church leaders in HIV/AIDS

awareness-raising among the conference's regional groups will start this month, followed by a second round of training sessions at national councils of churches. The conference comprises 172 member churches and associate members in 41 African countries.

PSI operates projects in 70 countries aimed at health, family planning and HIV/AIDS prevention. It uses the technique of social marketing — the planning and implementation of programs designed to bring about social change using concepts from commercial marketing.

ENI

U.S. ecumenical council backs boycott of taco and pickle companies

NEW YORK — The National Council of Churches endorsed consumer boycotts against two U.S. companies for practices it says are harming farm workers in the United States. The NCC support for the boycotts, announced in November during the council's General Assembly in Jackson, Mississippi, targets the fast-food giant Taco Bell, which sells Mexican-style food, and Mt. Olive Pickle, a manufacturer of pickles and other vegetable products.

The consumer boycotts are the first the NCC has endorsed since the apartheid era in South Africa, when the council called for a boycott of Royal Dutch/Shell products. The NCC rarely endorses boycotts, calling them "a measure of last resort."

"Any time a Christian community comes together and seeks to exercise economic justice in this way, it is because there is a very serious injustice that cannot be resolved in any other way," said Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Kirkpatrick's church, along with two other prominent NCC member



Photo by Danny Bolin, © PC(USA)

'There is a very serious injustice that cannot be resolved in any other way'

Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

denominations, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, had already endorsed the Taco Bell boycott. That boycott was called in March 2001 by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers based in the state of Florida. The workers coalition called for the action saying Taco Bell refused to address the "exploitation" of farm workers who pick tomatoes for one of Taco Bell's suppliers, the Six L's Packing Company.

The average rate paid to farm workers harvesting tomatoes is 40 cents US per 32-pound (15-kilo) bucket — the same rate they were paid in 1980, according to

U.S. government figures. In order to make \$50, farm workers must pick and haul two tons of tomatoes — which amounts to a form of virtual slavery, said the workers group.

The Mt. Olive boycott stems from failed attempts by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, a farm workers union, to get the pickle company to negotiate a labour contract for workers who harvest the vegetables. The company, based in North Carolina, is the largest independent producer of pickles in the United States.

Representatives for the companies quoted by the Associated Press said the boycott unfairly targeted their firms. Laurie Schalow, a Taco Bell representative, said its supplier had assured the company that workers were paid well above the average wage. Meanwhile, Lynn Williams, a Mt. Olive Pickle spokeswoman, said the union unfairly sought the company's participation in three-way bargaining talks. "We just don't believe that's an appropriate role for us to play," she said.

ENI

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reaffirms biennial meetings

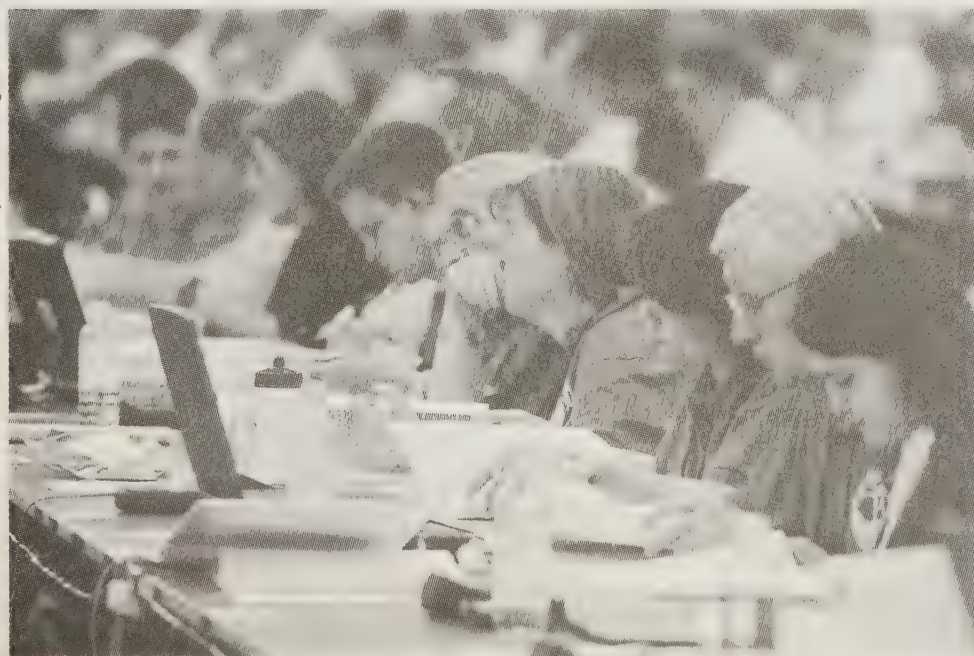
The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will break with tradition when it begins an experiment with biennial assemblies in 2005. It will be the first year without a national assembly since the church's founding in 1789. The move to biennial assemblies after 2004 was given support by the denomination's 215th General Assembly in May 2003 when it defeated an overture (by a vote of 285-230) to reverse the previous assembly's decision to meet every other year.

The measure has generated a lot of debate in the denomination. Arguments in favour of the move include: every year without an assembly would mean an estimated savings of \$3 million US to the church; church officers and staff would be less burdened in their efforts to carry out the will of the most recent assembly while preparing for the next; regional and national conferences scheduled between assemblies would preserve the "sacred connectivity within Presbyterian life"; the change was made on a trial basis only and can be reversed on the basis of an evaluation to be completed by

2010. Those who argue for a return to annual meetings state that meeting every year fosters connectivity and allows more Presbyterians to be involved in the life of the church.

The commissioners at last year's assembly also voted down a measure (267-245) that would have increased the number of youth advisory delegates taking part in the biennial assemblies. Youth participation will remain at the current level — one for each of the denomination's 173 presbyteries.

Perhaps to ensure it would get through the trial period without incident, the 2003 assembly voted to increase the number of commissioners required to force the calling of a special assembly. Until 2003, 25 elder commissioners and 25 minister commissioners correctly distributed among synods and presbyteries could demand such a special meeting. Now, however, doing so will require the assent of 25 per cent of elders and 25 per cent of ministers — approximately 70 of each according to last year's numbers. That vote was 436-67.



Commissioners and delegates attending the 215th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted to support the move to biennial assemblies.

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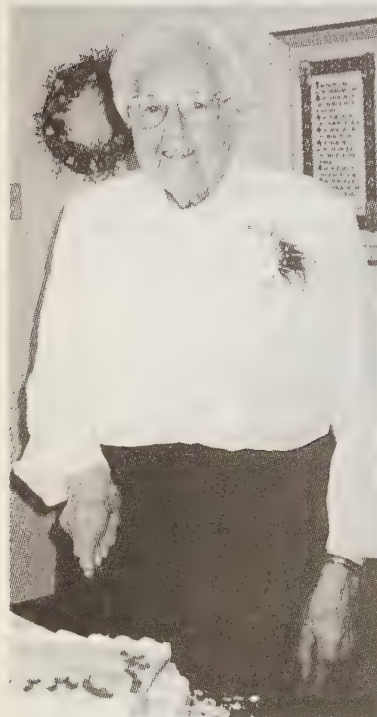
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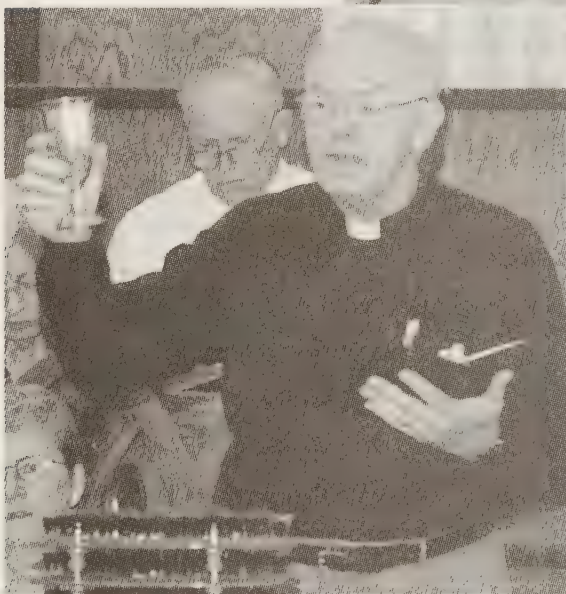
The congregation of St. Columba-by-the-Lake, Pointe Claire, Que., recently welcomed visitors from Japan, pictured with their hosts: Joyce Lowe, Reta and Angus Goodfellow, Bob and Annie Brown, and Margaret and John Patterson. Among the visitors was Victor Heese (holding his daughter, Hizuki) and his wife, Naomi. Victor was a long-time member of the congregation before moving to Japan to teach English.



Elizabeth Morrison, a member of Union Church, Mira Ferry, N.S., cuts a cake celebrating her 90th birthday last year.



An exciting game of Old Testament versus New Testament balloon volleyball was part of the annual Sunday school kickoff, called Ice Cream Sunday, at First, Regina.



Rev. Case Vanbodegom is pictured on his last Sunday in the pulpit before his retirement as minister of Durham Church, Durham, Ont., after four and a half years. Following worship, a party was held for Case and his wife, Mary.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Unfortunately, we cannot return any photographs. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

Marjorie Robertson and Lynn Tetz unveil a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II at a women's breakfast with a royal theme, held at Cooke's Church, Chilliwack, B.C.



Three Presbyterian organists received diplomas from the Royal Canadian College of Organists at its 2003 convocation. Heather Rice (left), organist at St Stephen's, Ottawa, received the choirmaster diploma. Donald Russell, a former organist at Gloucester Church, Ottawa, and a choir member at Knox, Ottawa, also received the choirmaster diploma. Janice Strifler, organist at Knox Preston, Cambridge, Ont., (and a former winner of the Lilian Forsyth Scholarship from Knox, Ottawa) received the service playing diploma.

About 30 children attended a vacation Bible school called Faith Mountain at Durham Church, Durham, N.S., last summer. Each day's offering (and loose change on Sunday) went to the Camp Geddie campers fund. Incidentally, the particularly wooden-looking figure in the middle of the group is a choir boy carved out of a tree.



Wilma Welsh (centre) was the guest speaker at a recent WMS Mission Awareness Sunday at St. Andrew's, Dresden, Ont. The occasion provided an opportunity for Wilma to reminisce with her hosts, Ruth and Rev. Andrew Song, about her mission experiences in Taiwan.

Ernie Sharman was recognized for his 10 years of service as clerk of session at a surprise retirement presentation at Westminster, Toronto. Rev. Dr. Jan McIntyre presented Ernie with a certificate, framed portrait and a Bible on behalf of the session and congregation.



Gathered around a miniature church built by George Coene for use in parades are the members of Crossbeat, a singing group from Knox, Bobcaygeon, Ont., who regularly present sacred and secular concerts. In the front: (L-R) pianist Ruth Eberts, Sharon Johnston, Nancy Crowe, Debbie Riseborough, Miriam Hedge and Rosalie Evans. In the back: David Leader, former Knox minister Rev. Doug Scott, Peter Van Oudenaren, Chuck Holman, Brian Eberts and Victoria Ingram.



A Volunteer Day to honour the more than 300 volunteers who contribute to the life of the church was held at St. Andrew's, Victoria. The organizers of the celebration, Marilyn Bullock and Bob Francis, are pictured with Rev. Dr. Michael Caveney. The cake was served by Lillian Hully and Edna Walton.



St. Andrew's, Guelph, Ont., began its 175th anniversary celebrations last year with a Walk of Faith from city hall (near the site of the original church) to the church's present location, led by piper Doug Davidson, Rev. John Borthwick, organist Fred Gingrich and members of the congregation. At a special worship service, guest speaker Rev. Dr. Peter Darch (now deceased) was named minister emeritus of St. Andrew's. In the afternoon, a festival of hymns, including choirs from other Guelph churches, was held, followed by a supper.



A float announcing the 150th anniversary of Melville Church, Brussels, Ont., in 2004, won first place in the Brussels fall fair last September. Leona Armstrong, an elder at Melville, holds the first-place certificate.

While there is no longer a women's group at West Vancouver Church, a family tree was made by women who were once part of the group and who still meet informally. Although built less than 40 years ago (1965), the church now has several

▲ families with a third generation attending.



▲ By twinning with a congregation in Malawi, the congregation of St. Giles, Ottawa, has developed a greater awareness of the AIDS crisis in Africa. Last summer, the Presbyterian Women enlisted the cooking skills of the congregation and organized a bake and deli sale. People in the neighbourhood were also drawn to the sale by African music on the church steps and flyers handed out on the sidewalk. A total of \$3,100 was raised for the Orphans in Crisis project of PWS&D, with a further \$225 in loose change for mosquito nets in Malawi.



Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi ▲ cuts a cake in celebration of her 10 years of ministry with the congregations of Amos, Dromore; Knox, Holstein; and Knox, Normanby, Ont. Beside her is Rev. Terrance Samuel, who shared in the celebration.



▲ An elders workshop on spirituality was held at Calvin, Halifax, last fall. The workshop, which included presentations by Rev. Kenneth Stright, Rev. Richard Sand and Herma Dunnevoild, was sponsored by the outreach and education committee of the Presbytery of Halifax and Lunenburg

Popular author spreads rumours in Toronto

Yancey challenges churches on the effectiveness of their message

by Alex MacLeod

The first thing you notice about Philip Yancey is the size of his hair: it's enormous! And it looks poised to expand even farther.

Something more significant — albeit less hypnotically fuzzy — is the size of Yancey's readership. From a juggernaut like *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, to lesser-known works such as *Reaching for the Invisible God*, to classics such as *The Jesus I Never Knew* or *Soul Survivor: How My Faith Survived the Church*, more than 13 million copies of his books have sold around the world. But he's not your average niche market success story.

Next to many Christian best-sellers, Philip Yancey is a godsend. It's almost surprising that his honest and ever-questioning approach to spiritual issues hasn't been left behind by a reading public that seems to prefer neat formulas, happy endings and books that come complete with their own line of shiny evangelical accessories.

Who are these millions of fans and where do they come from? Christians of all stripes and others with a general interest in faith, many beyond the pale of church culture, buy Yancey's books. He reaches out to a peculiarly faith-oriented constituency — one that is wary of institutions and not much impressed with religious behaviour. It's a group that outnumbers loyal churchgoers by a wide margin. That's even more the case in Canada than in Yancey's native United States, and it's especially true among Presbyterians (or former Presbyterians) north of the 49th parallel. Size matters in this case because the sheer numbers of people who read Yancey offer a reminder

that Christian faith still appeals on the basis of a thoughtful and winsome invitation to inquiry rather than on a dumbed-down, mass-marketing approach. Presbyterians — among the wider church's most idiosyncratic eggheads, in my experience — should sit up and take notice.

Yancey is one of us! He and his wife worship at a Presbyterian church in Colorado. He has come a long way since

'At the heart of the universe, there is not a frown but rather there is love, a smile'

growing up in America's Deep South where his formative experience of Christianity was at a narrowly fundamentalist church that promoted racism, legalism and exclusion. He angrily rejected Christian faith in his late teens and describes his journey back to belief as a "story of recovery." One motif that runs through his gradual conversion in his 20s and his writing over many years is grace. Yancey's commitment to a grace-filled faith lies at the heart of his passion to strip the church of the multiple layers of cultural or institutional outerwear that often keep people from noticing the central storyline.

In his latest book, *Rumours of Another World: What on Earth Are We Missing?*, Yancey steps into uncharted territory — a spirituality zone he calls

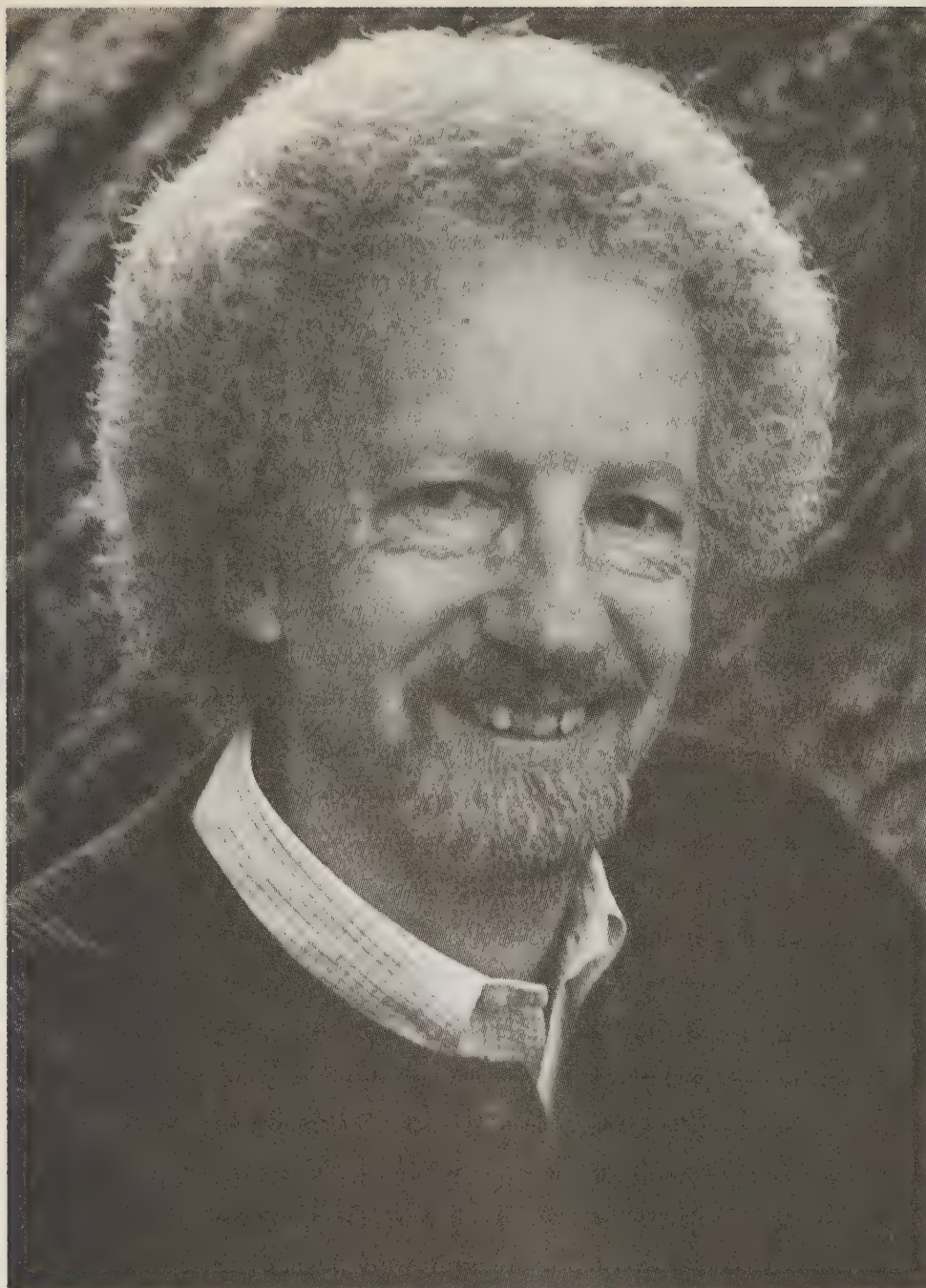
"the borderlands of belief." He asks new questions without the usual assumptions. He's writing for those who may be alienated from church because of a bad experience or who have never managed to fit into Christian community.

On a recent book-promo stop in Toronto, Yancey's wit and insight came across in person as much as they do in his writing. HarperCollins Canada partnered with Spirituality On Tap (www.spiritualityontap.com) — a weekly Alpha forum on spirituality held in a Toronto pub — to bring him to speak to more than 300 people.

Yancey outlines rumour after rumour that whispers of the possibility of another world beyond our immediate physical circumstances. We are wrong, he says, to assume a disconnect between our material experience and the invisible world of belief. Yancey suggests the visible world all around us is one of the best guides pointing to eternal reality; he calls these pointers "rumours of another world."

In a typically provocative style, he suggests that "most of the essentials of Christian theology can be argued from dirty jokes and funerals." Why do people find sex and bathroom humour to be funny? It's simple, says Yancey. "We're uncomfortable being bodies, so we laugh at bodily functions that seem ridiculous to us but are the most natural thing in the world to animals. Likewise, we may view death as strange and tragic, but other creatures don't seem bothered enough to stop for occasions like funerals. Our discomfort acts as a rumour of another world."

More broadly, Yancey identifies three areas where these otherworldly rumours



connected with him: the beauty of nature, classical music and romantic love. He speaks to those for whom the usual Christian categories hold little meaning and evoke even less interest. Words like “sin” and “salvation” don’t fly far, if they even get off the ground in our wider culture. Yancey wants to portray faith as a gateway to a life of good times — gorgeous sunsets, soaring arias and the passionate embrace of a lover — in the face of popular perception that the church is normally knee-jerk-like against pleasure. He sums it up, saying, “At the heart of the universe, there is not a frown but rather there is love, a smile.”

When I pressed him on whether a simple message of love runs the risk of being

too easy, he acknowledges that Jesus came to proclaim truth as well as grace. But he wants to stress grace. Christians compete, sometimes ruthlessly, for truth, he says; but they can’t justify competing for grace. And Yancey has no doubt we all need as much grace as we can get.

“People write to me saying grace is only one part of the story. What about Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s warning about cheap grace? Well, grace is free. It’s neither cheap nor expensive. There’s no price tag we can put on grace. It’s a gift. And it’s the only gift that’s a unique contribution of the church. Grace is our specialty — or at least it should be.”

Yancey is motivated to advocate for those who have been burned by organ-

ized religion, partly because of his nightmarish church experience early in life. But he also recognizes the central importance of self-sacrifice, service and community for Christians. Borrowing from Irenaeus, a second-century theologian, he observes that a single coal taken from the fireplace soon loses its heat and dies out. He makes the same point by comparing the church to a recovery group, like Alcoholics Anonymous, saying it’s hard to be a Christian alone.

For churches that want to reach out to those who inhabit the borderlands of belief, Yancey has this advice: “Follow the example of Willow Creek Church in Chicago and make the effort to lower the sub-cultural barriers that take the joy out of church for people. Do surveys to find out what these are. But go beyond that too. Churches and their leaders need to acknowledge a place for doubters. Very often people in church feel as if they’re the only ones who don’t get it. The minister says, ‘This is the way it is,’ and then we hear stories of triumph and success. From what I can tell, almost everyone doesn’t get it. Let’s acknowledge that.”

There’s a gentle humility about Yancey that is striking (even more so than his coiffure). It may be the scale of his success, which releases him from the need to sell himself and frees him to delve into the borderline grey areas of spirituality. But I get the impression that his willingness to listen to people and the integrity he displays in writing first of all for himself — to seek answers to his own questions about faith — are what has paved the way to his popularity.

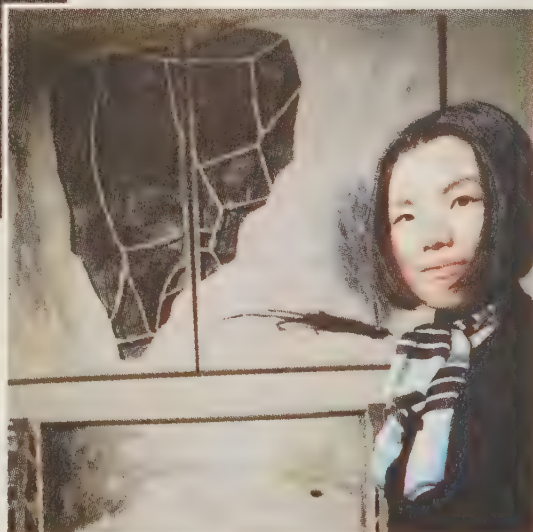
Philip Yancey still manages to write from outside the establishment. He tries to be a voice for those who don’t have a voice. He says he serves the kingdom and not the institution of the church. Skeptics are listening for this message about a different kind of Christianity. They may feel left behind by the church but they’ll reconsider when grace bids them welcome. And it’s probably safe to assume that these rumours Yancey is spreading of another world won’t die out any time soon. **R**

Alex MacLeod lives in downtown Toronto where he works with young adults at Knox Church (Spadina).

Church festival explores our spiritual side

Photos by Michael Hudson

Art and sports often seem like two cultures in collision but both can be integral parts of spirituality. A Festival of Thanksgiving and Spirituality, held Oct. 17-19 at Rosedale Church, Toronto, had representatives and presentations from both worlds to help participants explore their spiritual side. The weekend included a seminar on spirituality led by Rev. Harris Athanasiadis, who was also guest preacher on Sunday. There was also a youth event featuring Mike (Pinball) Clemons, coach of the Toronto Argonauts, and a participatory session called Come Let Us Sing — a look at the relationship between music and spirituality. The festival opened and closed with an art show (Spirit Reflections and Other Works), featuring the work of many Toronto-area artists.



Above: Visitors at the Festival of Thanksgiving and Spirituality art exhibit.

Right top: Artist Lily Yee with her mixed media triptych *Wealth*.

Right centre: Artist Katherine Anne Flanders with her oil paintings exploring the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Right bottom: Sung Ja Kim Chisholm with her mixed media painting on 1 Corinthians.

Right: Elizabeth and Alexander Wilson select their favourite painting from the show.
Below: Michele Nidenoff, artist and illustrator, with acrylic prints done for the Bible Quest Sunday school curriculum.



Mike (Pinball) Clemons, head coach of the Toronto Argonauts, shared his thoughts on the importance of spirituality in setting life goals, with emphasis on respect, love, integrity and God. "Live as though you already have the victory," he told the group of about 20 young people and adults.



Dear Editor:

Joyless John McWhirter's fortune from his (accidental/inadvertent) lottery win remains largely intact, much to the disgust of the proponents of the defunct Cinnamon Springs Spirituality Centre and Presbyterian Church project. My-My Myles, our presbytery's chair of the outreach and development committee and aspiring real estate magnate, continues to appeal to John (perhaps "pester" is more accurate than "appeal to") with suggestions that begin, "Why don't we blow the whistle on this and see who lets the dogs out?"

So far, John has been content to leave the dogs kennelled and has managed to refrain from asking his tormentor to join them.

As I have reported, he has dipped into his windfall to the improvement of his own Gilead Presbyterian Church (or "plant," as the Rev. Mr. Myles would call it, never wondering when he does why John can't stand him). But he is not intent on hoarding his unexpected fortune, as I discovered on an otherwise sleepy Monday when we agreed to meet for lunch at one of the forlornly littered backwaters of a local mall's food court.

In a rare moment of daring, John had ordered poutine, thinking he would like to sample something French and exotic, and was rather disconsolately picking his way around the lumps of semi-melted cheese curd only to discover soggy french fries. "I'm thinking of founding *and* financing a new organization, Plymley ... or maybe a new movement ... or maybe an idea ... I don't know ... I"

John was seldom, if ever, so shy and indeterminate in his pronouncements. I left off trying to guess the species of vegetable in my veggie burger.

"The thing is, Plymley, we Presbyterians have this awful desperation. The right enfolds itself in an alliance to reform and renew the fellowship, going to and fro about the land seeking those

whose dismay might lead them to answer the siren call of yesterday. The left, tiny but potent as they are, buy their prophetic mantles off the rack and sing their version of our imminent doom to the tune of guilts that must be assembled from parts provided, or they peddle end-of-the-line apostasies reduced for quick sale. The always amorphous centre grabs at anything that approximates the latest guide to success in the 'market' for souls, usually 'the latest' only to us, and much in need of metric calibration if it is to be of any use to the Canadian situation — which

How many of our clergy and leaders read theology? How many read?

happens to be ours. The inspirers and agenda-setters of the national church office — commonly known as Wynford Drive — keep prodding us to do more intensely what we *should* have been doing all along, or at least since the second century AD." (John never uses BCE.)

"I am proposing," said he, "a coalition that will undertake to defend and to do what is now fashionably beyond the pale. I'll call it The Society of Those Who Are Dedicated to Keep on Doing What We Have Always Been Doing." I asked him to repeat the name and wrote it down, trying to avoid the grease spots on my napkin.

"Not a very promising anagram, John — TSOTWADTKODWWHABD. And isn't that precisely what the entire menagerie of Canadian Presbyterians opposes? They all sing from the same page on that theme: 'We can't keep on doing, etc.'"

"But that's the point, Plymley! The fact is that all who decry what we've always been doing have no idea what it is they're trashing! Despite official denials and wishful thinking, we have been jumping on Leacock's horse and riding

off in all directions for about four decades now." (John still reads Stephen Leacock, the famous Canadian humorist and ... oh, never mind.) "And we've lost sight of all we did well for the other 45 and more decades. How many of our clergy and leaders read theology, except when they are looking for a hammer to wield on the opposition? How many read the news without searching for fresh alarms and sources of guilt? How many read? How much of our history do they, or our people, know? We've been through some battles in the past four

decades, but heaven knows they were not the first. And all those people, lay people and clergy, how many of them have ever opened the Book of Forms they profess to see as 'dead rules' or something?"

"Well, John, it's hardly electrifying reading."

He gave up any further assaults on his congealed meal and produced a plastic vial from his inside pocket. "Neither are the instructions on a bottle of pills, but they're there for good reason." He popped the lid, took one and swallowed it with the dregs of his coffee.

"But you're right, Plymley, I've got to come up with another name for my proposal. I'm going to need your help."

"But ..."

"Through many dangers, toils and snares," Plymley." Then he leaned closer and said in a whisper, "And money helps."

Yours nervously,



Working against the odds

James Milner helps refugees find hope

by Tom Dickey

James Milner was 18 years old when a handful of maize changed his life. It was 1992, and James (a member of Trinity York Mills, Toronto) was serving as a volunteer on a Youth in Mission project in Malawi.

"It had been many months since the last rain," James later wrote of his experience. "Everything had withered into shades of grey and brown. The rivers had run dry. The crops had failed ... I volunteered to stay longer to assist with the distribution of maize shipped to Malawi by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We ran out of water. The truck broke down. We were confronted by grinding poverty and an unforgiving environment. It was my last day on the project. I wanted nothing more than to leave Africa."

Hot, tired and frustrated, James dragged the bags of grain across the floor of the truck as he unloaded them. When

the last bag tore and a few handfuls of maize spilled out, three young boys climbed into the back of the truck. They were wearing faded and tattered school uniforms. Their knees were swollen and their hair discoloured — early signs of malnutrition. Without saying a word,

Receiving the Trudeau scholarship was a way of saying 'refugees do matter'

they started to collect the spilled maize. When James joined them, one of the boys looked up and smiled.

"I will never forget the look of determination and pride in his eyes," James recalls. "Against the odds, that boy had hope. Eleven years later, I still see a strong link between what I am doing

now and the look in the eyes of that boy."

What James Milner is doing now — really, what he has been doing since the day he made eye contact with the boy in Malawi — is working for the protection of refugees. Motivated to seek a better understanding of the causes of human displacement and the ability of the international community to respond, James has gone on to earn a BA in peace and conflict, African studies, from the University of Toronto and a master's degree in philosophy development from Oxford University. Amazingly, while continuing his studies (currently, he is working toward a doctorate in development studies at Oxford), James has also found time to be a consultant to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, Switzerland.

In Africa, James has worked not only in Malawi but also in Cameroon, Kenya,



James Milner presents a soccer ball to the chairman of the Telikoro refugee camp, Guinea, for refugees from Sierra Leone.

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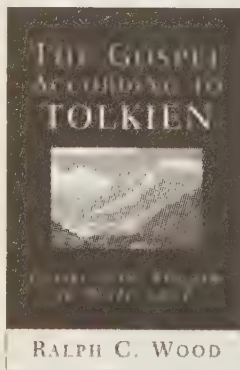
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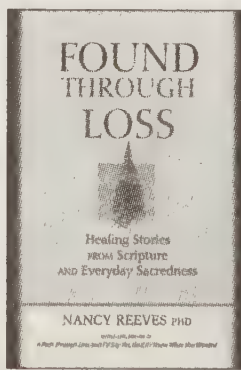
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Tanzania and Guinea. In India, he has worked with refugees from Afghanistan (ethnic minorities and educated women) and from Iran (religious minorities). In his current research, he is drawing on specific cases in Guinea, Tanzania and Kenya in looking for a way to balance the migration-related security concerns of states with the needs of refugees.

James's work and dedication have not gone unnoticed. He has been the recipient of a meritorious service award and an alumni association scholarship from the University of Toronto, and was named the Mahatma Gandhi Scholar in Peace and Conflict at the university. He has also received the Gilbert Murray Trust Junior Award (for graduates demonstrating commitment to the purposes and work of the United Nations) and a Chevening scholarship from the British High Commission and British Council.

In 2003, he became one of 12 inaugural winners of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation scholarship. Chosen from more than 130 doctoral students, the eventual winners of the \$35,000 per year scholarships had to go through a meticulous selection process that involved nomination by a university, a review of their work by an external panel and a personal interview. Typically, James deflects this latest honour away from himself and toward his work. "Receiving the Trudeau scholarship," he said, "was not only a tremendous affirmation of what I am trying to do — like a way of saying that refugees do matter — but has also made me feel closer to Canada's long and proud humanitarian tradition."

James Milner is convinced God has called him into ministry — into a ministry centred on the resettlement of refugees. His determination brings to mind the words of a modern-day poet, Bob Dylan: *Flashing for the warriors whose strength is not to fight / Flashing for the refugees on the unarmed road of flight / And for each and every underdog soldier in the night / And we gazed upon the chimes of freedom flashing.*

James himself is fond of quoting from a much older source — Romans 12. For him, the plight of the refugee will always be the plight of the world. **R**

Based on a report by Betty Worthington.



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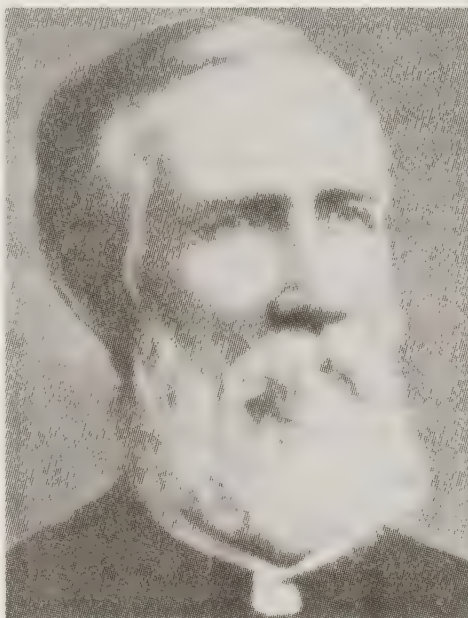
How the West was one

The Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod

by Tom Dickey

There are not many presbyteries that can trace their beginnings to the days of the Wild West, but the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod is certainly one of them. The first Presbyterian minister to come to Alberta, Rev. A.B. Baird, arrived on the scene in 1881 — a time when Confederation was still fresh, the Northwest Mounted Police had been recently formed, the railway was completed, treaties were being signed with First Nations people, and that great icon of the West, the buffalo, had been nearly wiped out. With the completion of the railway came miners, cowboys, immigrants and job seekers. The Mounties soon had their hands full.

The presbytery includes Lethbridge, a city that was among the wildest in the West when it was incorporated in 1883, and Medicine Hat, a city whose name alone conjures up images (in cinema-scope) of open plains and rugged mountains. Calgary had its beginnings as a Northwest Mounted Police fort, built in 1875 to prevent American whiskey traders from doing business with the Indians.



Rev. James Robertson, the first superintendent of missions in Western Canada in 1881.

In Western Canadian terms, Presbyterianism in southern Alberta has deep roots. The person most responsible for planting those roots was the industrious Rev. James Robertson, appointed the first superintendent of Western missions in

1881. Under his diligent preparation, Presbyterian worship services soon followed, conducted by Rev. Angus Robertson (no relation) in Calgary and Medicine Hat in 1883 and Rev. Charles McKillop in Lethbridge in 1885. (Upon Mr. Robertson's death in Jan. 1902, it was necessary to appoint three men to handle the work he alone had been doing.)

Today, the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod extends from the British Columbia border and Rocky Mountains, across the Prairies to Saskatoon, and from Calgary to the United States border. In 1969, the Presbytery of Macleod amalgamated with the Presbytery of Calgary. Although the congregations from the former Macleod presbytery have become fewer in number, the congregations of Banff, Bassano, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat have remained vibrant. The result is one of the healthiest presbyteries in the church. Today, there are 17 congregations in the presbytery: 10 in Calgary (one of the country's fastest growing cities), two each in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, one in the resort town



Westminster Church: one of three congregations begun in Calgary within the past 15 years.

Timeline

for Zilpha and Larry Snyder

Fifty years to make a marriage! Why, Jesus himself died and rose in just three days! Five days for wedding and honeymoon is the time it took Napoleon to lose Waterloo and twenty thousand men.

Seventeen days to write the Declaration of Independence or suffer after the first quarrel, and five years until a child goes off to school, the same time it took Schliemann to uncover Troy. Ten years of holding hands

and letting go, are the ten years of peasants placing rock for the first Wall of China, and twelve years of trying to know each other, as Alexander for twelve years, discovered his new kingdoms. We discover these

are not enough hours to understand a single human heart. Thirty-one years of babies and homes and work, and then the children gone, the same span needed for World War One and Two, and all

that lay between. As Peter for fifty years dragged the Russians out of darkness, this act of will and holy spirit, this thing of marriage, drags men and women into brightness, where they stand, still

sometimes, uncomprehending, the husband and the wife, when everyone else has gone, side by side, waiting to gaze at their more than six hundredth full moon when it rises tonight among the stars.

— Louise Murphy

of Banff, and the two-point charge of Gem and Bassano, the only rural charge remaining in the presbytery. Of those 17 congregations, three from Calgary have been added to the presbytery within the past 15 years — Westminster, Valleyview and Trinity. With both faith and good cause, the presbytery has purchased land in the growing-edge, north-central and far southwestern parts of Calgary for possible future church development.

Meanwhile, the existing congregations continue to provide a strong witness to the work of the church. St. Andrew's, Lethbridge, is known for its Christian education work. It is the main source of support for the Ecumenical Campus Ministry at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Community College. Its Sunday services are videotaped and broadcast over local cable TV. Bethlen Church, although much smaller in numbers, continues to serve the Hungarian Presbyterian community faithfully.

In Medicine Hat, St. John's celebrated the 100th anniversary of its church building (the original) in 2002. Riverside Church is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Although relatively young, the Riverside congregation also has an interesting history. It began during the heady days of the '50s and '60s and an experiment called The Presbyterian Training School. The school in Medicine Hat for training laity was created by the Synod of Alberta and supported by the Women's Missionary Society and the Board of Christian Education.

In Banff, St. Paul's finds itself in the unusual and enviable situation of having the world come to its doors. Located in a national park, St. Paul's has a significant increase in attendance during ski season and the congregation is dotted with new faces every Sunday. The two-point charge of Knox, Bassano, and Gem Church continues to demonstrate the hard-working and lasting character of the rural community it serves.

Rudyard Kipling once remarked that Medicine Hat had "all hell for a basement." It was, of course, a reference to the vast reserves of natural gas beneath the land and not to the local theology. The Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod continues to give evidence that it is built on a much firmer foundation. ☐

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Standing at the portal

Listening to God when everything sounds hollow

by David Webber

The final shift walked out through the mine portal at quitting time on Friday, just before the new year began a couple of years ago. They walked to the braying of bagpipes. So ended more than 100 years of mining in what was touted as the largest underground silver, lead and zinc mine in the world. So ended the jobs — at one time more than 2,000 — that were the financial backbone of a thriving village for more than a century. So ended the generous salting of the economy for the whole East Kootenay region nestled in the splendour of British Columbia's Rocky Mountain trench. So ended the tradition of family member after family member working in the mine, many of them for four generations.

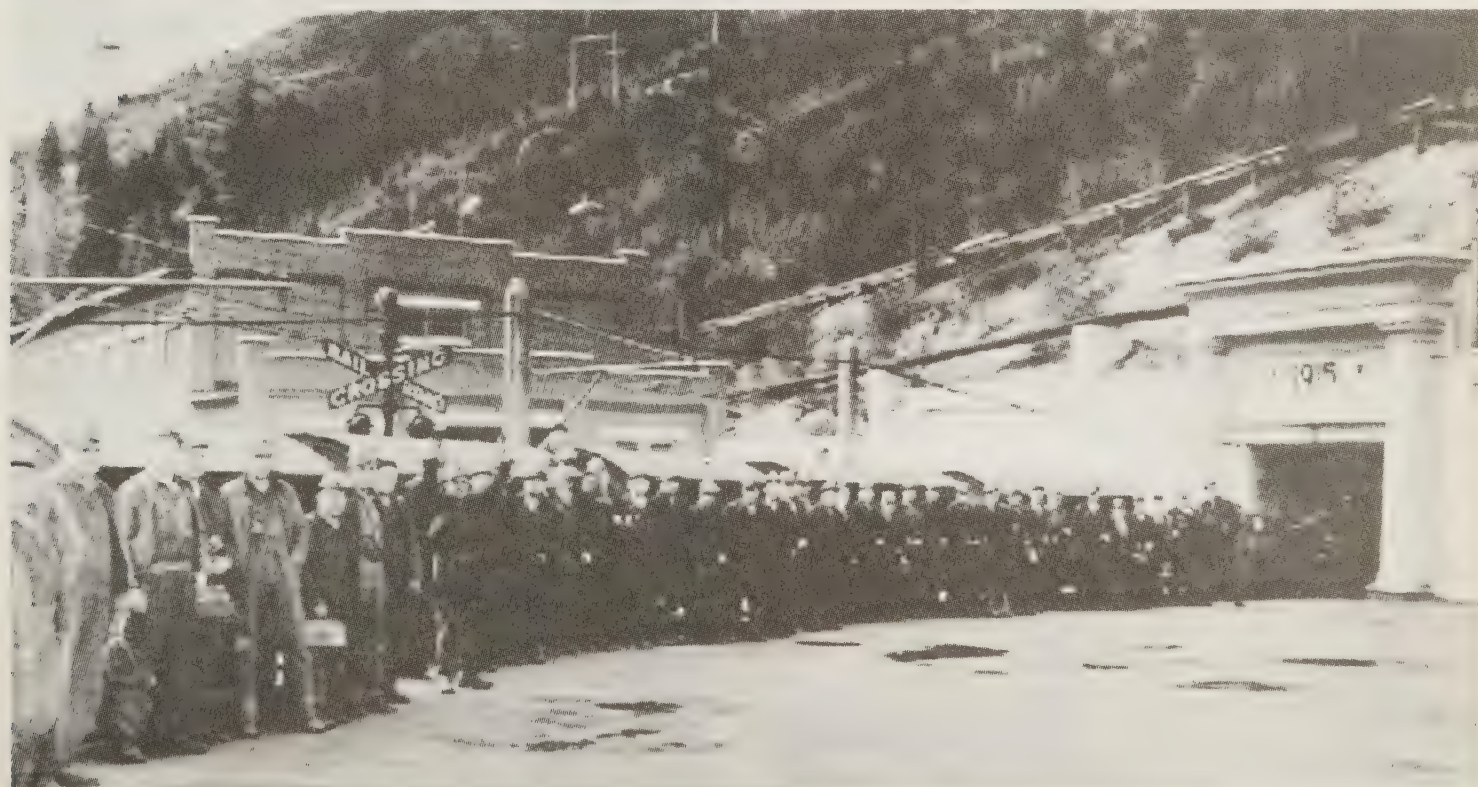
I know the families well. I went to school with them, played rugby with their

sons and kissed their daughters. I never worked in the mine. I grew up in the country outside the village of Kimberley. My family worked in the bush, not under it. I was never directly suckled at the generous breast of Mother Cominco, then or now. But for many of my friends with whom I went to high school, the mine was their lifeblood. Many of them left high school and went directly to the security of the high-paying mining jobs that beckoned to them. They settled into the routine of working for "The Company," marrying their neighbours, raising another generation for the mine, buying alpine houses with steep-pitched roofs, enjoying a comfortable and secure life.

The work was hard but it was always there. You could count on it. You could stand at the portal of the Sullivan mine

and know that, whatever else happened, there was work to be had and a future to be blasted out of the mountain. But, then, on a Friday just before Christmas, it all ended. Many of my high school chums found themselves out of work. Many found themselves too young for the golden handshake and yet reluctant to leave their beloved community to look for work. Standing at the portal of the new year, many looked into the future, wondering, perhaps with a sense of dread in their hearts.

In many hamlets and cities in our country today, people find themselves facing rock-hard economic times as they stare down the tunnel of the new year. In 2003, acronyms like SARS, BSE and NAFTA left everything from the tourist industry, through the farming industry, to



Men line up at the tunnel entrance of the Sullivan Mine, Kimberley, B.C., in 1938.

the lumber industry in chaos. Floods in one region and fires in another have pressed people into economic and emotional depression.

What is easy to understand is the closing of a mine, the shut-down of a sawmill, the disintegration of a family farm and the rusting out of a fishing boat. What is easy to understand is unemployment, poverty and hopelessness. What is impossible to misunderstand is your own son trying to eke out a life for himself and his family in the poverty of the minimum wage.

How do we stand at the portal of time and find hope? For many, these are bleak economic times — and we live in the one-third of the world that is well off.

You could say, "There are worse off than us," but I won't be so presumptuous. You could say, "Things can only get better," but I won't be so audacious. You could say, "Every cloud has a silver lining," but I won't be so preposterous. You could say, "Money is not everything," but I will not be so pretentious. I will not say anything. Those words sound hollow and inadequate in these times.

It is a time for God to speak. And God says:

"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isaiah 43:1b-3a)¹.

Inspired by what God said in these verses, Frances Ridley Havergal wrote the poem that follows. I find she speaks hope into my life these days. Perhaps she will do the same for you as you stand at the portal of 2004.

Standing at the portal of the opening year,
words of comfort meet us hushing every fear,
spoken through the silence by God's loving voice,
tender, strong and faithful, making us rejoice.

"I, your God, am with you: do not be afraid;
I will help and strengthen; do not be dismayed,
for I will uphold you with my own right hand;
you are called and chosen in my sight to stand."

God will not forsake us and will never fail;
God's eternal covenant ever will prevail.
Resting on his promise, what have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient for the coming year.

Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day,
for God's word shall never, never pass away.

¹New Living Translation

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen* and *And the Aspens Whisper*.

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Church is the last place pop culture looks for spirituality

by Andrew Faiz

The church may have one foundation, but the next row of bricks is an increasingly loose collection of unmortared institutional bricks. Still, those bricks provide a home for many. For the pop-culture world, however, it is a house of horrors. Pop culture views the church as a behemoth — a monster. It is deemed authoritarian, antiquated and avaricious. In pop culture, the church is anathema to individualism (the religion of pop culture), which is represented, of course, by sex.

*I think there is a union
between the flesh and the spirit
It's sex and the church
Sex and the church.*

— David Bowie

Think of them as twins — or as symbiotic partners — because they certainly are in the movies. If the movie (from the past two decades, certainly) is in a religious setting, you know it will be about sex. *Priest* (1994): the story of a gay priest. *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988): as Jesus is hanging on the cross, he thinks about the life he could have had if he weren't the Christ, including getting married and having kids (which, unlike his own birth, would have involved the act of procreation, with Mary Magdalene no less). *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002): to quote a website: "an unflinching and compelling emotional drama, charting several years in the young lives of four 'fallen women' who were rejected by their families and abandoned to the mercy of the Catholic Church in 1960's Ireland." *Footloose* (1984): a pious community, led by a pious minister, has banned all dancing. To quote a website: "Kevin Bacon seduces the minister's daughter and brings

fun and dancing to the angry God-man's repressed town." (This is hardly an exhaustive list: see also Paul Simon's song Duncan, Dusty Springfield's song Son of a Preacher Man and John Irving's book *A Prayer for Owen Meany*.)

This relationship isn't simply a metaphorical convenience. The church was constantly in the headlines last year and almost all the instances had to do with sex: Texas sodomy laws, gay marriages, gay priests and pedophiliac priests. The Anglican Church is split over the issue of gay priests. The Roman Catholics are defensive about their scandals. Sex and the church are connected, but the relationship is not a healthy one.

"I read this in the paper this morning: 'New York City has a priest shortage.' So you see, there is some good news in the world."

— David Letterman

It seems odd, in a world where *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Joe Millionaire* and *Temptation Island* are prime-time television shows, that there might be an institution still struggling with its understanding of sex. Public schools teach there is no difference between straight and gay. Popular education and sensibility toward sexuality has moved well past that of the church.

*Jesus was a Capricorn, he ate
organic foods.*

*He believed in love and peace and
never wore no shoes.*


*Long hair, beard and sandals and
a funky bunch of friends.*

*Reckon they'd just nail him up if he
come down again.*

— Kris Kristofferson

Pop culture — as much a behemoth as the church — keenly separates faith from institution. There is a God and there is a Christ but they aren't necessarily related to an institution. Christ does not have a bride; he's a single guy doing his Father's work. The church, then, is empty according to popular culture. Kristofferson nails the central message of pop culture: have faith in Christ, but not in the church. The latter is everything the former was not.

Joan of Arcadia is a new television series in which God appears frequently to a teenage girl. The girl's family, though comfortable, is an emotional mess. At one point, Joan tells God her father is "a little angry at the church." To which God replies, "It's not about being religious — it's about fulfilling your destiny." There's the ultimate pop-cultural God talking and, in doing so, reflecting the true nature of pop-Christianity. In another episode of the series, Joan's mother confronts a priest outside a mall. The priest is collecting funds for a charity and is unable to answer or calm any of the mother's concerns. But, then, why would he? He's merely an employee of the church. God doesn't appear to him. It's a subtle denunciation of the church, but it is added to the myriad others. The church is merely the repository of religiosity which, according to the gospel of the pop culture, is no place for spirituality.

Now that I think on it, Christ had a similar take on the religious institutions of his day. 

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.



Spirituality and justice for all

To experience life fully, our worship and work must be one

by Helen Smith

The old black and white television sets of my childhood had two knobs for adjusting the clarity of the picture. There was a vertical hold and a horizontal hold. Both knobs had to be adjusted correctly for a clear picture.

A quick glance through the Scriptures reveals a similar situation. If we are to have a clear picture of life, if we want to experience the life in abundance that Jesus talked about, both our vertical (God-human) relationship and our horizontal (human-human) relationships need to be adjusted properly. The two are interdependent.

There is a communion hymn in *The Book of Praise* (1997) that reflects this. In *Worship the Lord* by Fred Kaan, the last line of each verse is "Worship and work must be one!" The Old Testament prophets also say over and over again that experiencing God goes hand in hand with practising justice toward our neighbour. Worship and work must be one.

Isaiah 58 tells of a people who are trying to experience the presence of God, but they are feeling only God's absence. Isaiah comments that their religiosity is

empty because they do not act justly toward their neighbour. They fast, but serve only their own interests. The fast that God chooses is "to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke ... to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into

We experience God when we care for our neighbour

your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin" (Isaiah 58:6-7). "Then," Isaiah declares, "[when you fast in this way] you shall call, and the Lord will answer ... you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail" (58:9a, 11b). You will experience God's presence in your life when you care for your neighbour.

Similarly, Amos talks of how God despises the empty religious rituals of the people. They go through the religious

motions but, once again, ignore their neighbour. We hear those powerful words of God: "Hear this, you ... who oppress the poor, who crush the needy ... Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel ... I hate, I despise your festivals, and take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 4:1a, 5:1, 21-24).

Micah states succinctly what God says is good and what God requires of us: "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

In the New Testament, Jesus identifies with humanity, especially with the least of us. If we want to know Jesus, we cannot ignore one another. In Matthew 25, it is clear that, if we want to see Jesus, we need to look into our neighbour's eyes.



A worship service at Evangel Hall, Toronto.

Whatever we do for our neighbour, Jesus says, we do for him. Again, in Mark 9:37, Jesus says that when we welcome a little child in his name, we welcome the Christ, and not only the Christ, but also the One who sent the Christ. Once again the vertical and horizontal holds are interdependent. We experience God when we care for our neighbour.

Evangel Hall in downtown Toronto is part of the Presbyterian Church's ministry among people with limited economic resources. It is one venue for practising justice and, in Isaiah's words, not hiding from our own kin. Our mission statement reads:

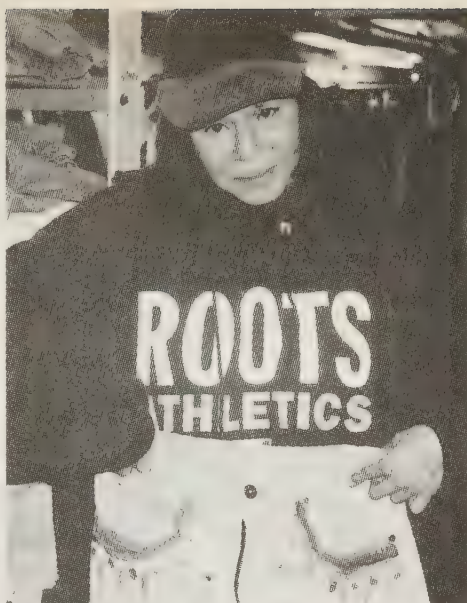
The mission of Evangel Hall is to enable the distressed of Toronto's inner city to achieve their potential through a Christian ministry of service, programs, and advocacy designed to nurture self-esteem and human dignity.

Our programs include: an adult drop-in, employment help, housing help, community kitchen, community dinners, voluntary trusteeship, advocacy, life skills training, gardening, youth leadership training through the arts, counselling, a thrift shop, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and worship.

One of the most interesting developments over the past few years is the expansion of our volunteer base. Today at the hall, volunteers are involved in sorting clothes in the thrift shop, preparing meals in the kitchen, and distributing shampoo, razors, soap and other personal items from what we call the sundries counter at the drop-in. Volunteers come from our own participants, the community and area churches. And we all work together.

We are learning that worship and work must be one. Our vertical and horizontal holds are in the process of being adjusted. We are seeing the transformation of individual lives as those who are thought of as worthless by society find new purpose and value in life through our volunteer work. We see the transformation of individual lives as people move out of their isolation, whether in the inner city or suburbs or rural areas, into a caring, redeeming community.

We also see the transformation of this whole community as more and more



Stephanie Abel helps out in Evangel Hall's thrift shop.

people become involved and take ownership in the work of the hall. Board, staff, participants and the larger church all work together to continue this ministry. And it seems to me that the place it all comes together is the worship service on Sunday evenings. Here is a look-in on our worship service:

It is Sunday evening at Evangel Hall. Some people have brought food to share with those who have little. The dinner is over. Mario sets up the keyboard. Others stack the tables and set up the chairs. The communion table is pulled out from the wall. About 30 people gather. They come from the streets, from seniors housing, from rented rooms, from crack houses and comfortable homes, from lowest Rosedale and suburban Thornhill.

For further reflection and discussion

- What does the expression "worship and work must be one" mean to you?
- How would you translate the concerns of Isaiah 58:3-7 into 21st-century life here in Canada? In the world?
- What are some ways you and/or your local church are meeting these concerns, doing justice, loving kindness, walking humbly with God?
- Reflect upon a time when your involvement in practising justice resulted in your seeing the face of Christ.


For further reading

Pat Capponi, *The War at Home: An Intimate Portrait of Canada's Poor* (Viking Press, 1999)
 Andrew Fullerton, *Regarding the Holy: Tales From the Miry Clay* (Boarding Homes Ministry, Toronto, 2003)
 Gerald W. Schlabach, *And Who is My Neighbour?* (Herald Press, 1990)
 The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, *Our Neighbours' Voices: Will We Listen?* (James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 1998)

Robert gives the call to worship. Brenda leads the service of praise. Amazing Grace is the favourite hymn. Joseph sings a solo — Jesus Bids Us Shine. Marv talks about his years of drug addiction, living in the ravine and how Jesus, in the form of street nurses and outreach workers, set him free. He reads 1 John 4 and calls us to love one another.

Now it is time to pray. (The worship leader leaves this part out at her peril.) The people have come to express their joys and sorrows to God and to one another, and they cherish this opportunity. They request prayer for the people who brought the food, children they have not seen in years, peace in the Middle East, and the family of a child murdered in the city. A congregation that visited us last week has phoned and asked us to pray for a bereaved family.

God is in our midst. We acknowledge and celebrate the presence of God. Now it is time to go in peace.

"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them" (Revelation 21:3). 

Rev. Helen Smith is director of outreach programs at Evangel Hall, Toronto.

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly:
www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

Growing up with God, dying with God

Growing up with God: Using Stories to Explore a Child's Faith and Life by Nancy Cocks (Novalis, 2003, ISBN 2-89507-168-3, 270 pp., \$20.95).

For Words: A Journal of Hope and Healing by Chris Vais (Susan McLeod, 2003, ISBN 0-9733474-0-6, 270 pp., \$15).

by Erin Walton and David Harris

Growing up with God by Nancy Cocks is an essential resource for anyone who cares about the faith development of children. The author's research behind the book, called The Story Project, is not only fascinating but extensive. It reveals insights into what children say about and to God and, consequently, helps adults understand a child's faith development better and see God with the innocence, openness and honesty of a child.

As a youth minister, I have shared Nancy Cocks's Fergie the Frog stories in children's sermons and church school. The stories are well-received (and the Fergie puppet didn't hurt either). Now that I've met Sherman the Hound Dog and Jackie Rabbit, I only wish I'd known them sooner and read *Growing up with God* sooner! This book is a vital tool for church school teachers, parents, grandparents and child care providers. It is especially helpful for ministers, youth ministers and anyone else called to lead the children's time during the worship service.

The theoretical techniques of storytelling are blended expertly with practical storytelling techniques and actual short stories. Often, this special time in worship with the youngest church family members is rushed and full of laughs; but it is important to remember that this is usually the only time during worship that belongs to the children. The message they get from the storyteller and the congregation at this time is crucial, and the

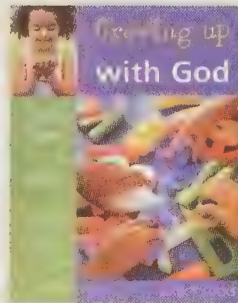
stories need to be age-appropriate, interesting, easily understood yet thought-provoking. Most important, the stories should present children with ideas they will want to explore further and, ultimately, that will develop their faith.

The resource list in *Growing up with God* is so comprehensive the book is suitable for beginners — those just starting to develop their storytelling skills or who have been called to share their faith with children. As a curriculum writer, I found the Index of Biblical References and the Index of Faith Themes the most useful; as a storyteller, I found the Index of Feelings Explored in the Story and the Index of Life Situations the most helpful.

Whatever your role or interest is, this book has something for everyone and then some! I recommend *Growing up with God* wholeheartedly. It should be in every church library or resource centre to be accessible to everyone.

Dr. Cocks was born in Alberta and raised in Saskatchewan. She has been a minister of the Presbyterian Church for more than 20 years and has served congregations in Ontario and British Columbia and taught pastoral theology for 10 years at Vancouver School of Theology. She is currently working with the Iona Community in Scotland. (EW)

If you grow up with God, dying with God may be less terrifying. Certainly, Rev. Chris Vais's death was remarkable for his faith, and it is a gift he and his wife, Susan, have given readers with the



Rev. Chris Vais

publication of newsletters (called *For Words*) he circulated while he was living — and dying — with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Here is a Christian struggling with himself, God and his disease. He neither whines nor despairs nor is he Pollyannish.

He describes one incident when, in anger, he drove his wheelchair into a table. The crash damaged the wheelchair. When asked by the repairman what happened, Chris writes: "Not wanting to share with him the truth of my anger, I replied, 'It was an accident — you know — chair rage.'"

This is a collection of deep reflections from a man — a son, a brother, a husband, a father and a friend — reflecting on life even as he reflects on death. It is, therefore, a book every Christian should read, because the perspectives touch every life and every death.

Dr. Vais was destined to be a leader and a teacher in the church. That he managed to write this much, pecking away letter by letter with his deteriorating body, reveals in itself something of his character and his will to share his faith and insights in a confident, yet gracious way.

He is undoubtedly missed by many people, but he will hardly be forgotten.

One hopes a publishing house might consider Vais's book a valuable part of a collection on a subject such as living with terminal illness, because it is an accessible and helpful commentary on facing the vagaries of life in this world with a faith that looks confidently toward the next. (DH)

For Words can be ordered by mail only. Send cheque/money order for \$15 made payable to Susan McLeod to: For Words, PO Box 31013, Guelph, ON N1H 8K1. ☐

Erin Walton is youth minister at First Church, Edmonton.

David Harris is editor of the *Presbyterian Record*.

Books of interest to ministers

Grace: A Preaching Commentary by Stephen Farris (Abingdon, ISBN 0-687-09046-6, 150 pp., 2003, \$30.50).

As the publisher's note says, grace is a disarmingly familiar word, yet a stubbornly difficult idea to understand fully. It is a word heard in church all the time, yet who can sound its depth?

When preaching on grace, what texts does one choose and how does one approach them?

How does one distinguish the various uses of the concept of grace in the Bible. Does the term mean the same thing in the Prophets as it does in the Gospels?

In this newest addition to the Great Texts series, Stephen Farris, dean of St. Andrew's Hall and professor of homiletics at Vancouver School of Theology, explores the many questions related to grace, taking some of the most important biblical passages and offering insightful commentary into the original context and contemporary meaning of the texts.



Peter Martyr Library (Truman State University Press, 100 E. Normal St., Kirksville, MO 63501, U.S.A., 1-800-916-6802, \$40-\$45 US).

Peter Martyr Vermigli was one of the most accessible theological writers of the 16th century. The first series of Vermigli's chief works consists of 12 volumes, some translated by Canadian Presbyterians — Mariano DiGangi, Joseph C. McLelland and Daniel J. Shute. These books are a valuable addition to any library collection in theology.

Books of note by Presbyterians

Religious Institutions and the Law in Canada, 2nd edition by M.H. Ogilvie (ISBN 1-55221-069-3, 446 pp., \$59.95).

This revised edition is the first Canadian legal text on the law relating to religious institutions. Carleton University law professor Margaret Ogilvie, a member of Knox Church, Ottawa, draws on legal, historical and theological sources and deals with almost every area in which Canadian laws impact religion or religious institutions, including constitutional and criminal law, property, corporations, trusts, taxation, discipline, family, health, and educational matters.



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thieves, those who lust, etc., but neither should we encourage those behaviours by accepting them. We should embrace these people, as Christ would, and show them who Jesus is and how he can help all of us. I believe we should love the sinner but hate the sin.

Norman Macdonald wrote (Letters, November): "If this is the course the Presbyterian Church chooses to take, then I will, with sadness, be among the first to answer the apostle Paul's call to come out from among them." I will be the second.

I will continue to pray for the Presbyterian Church and the other Christian churches: have courage and do not lose heart, stay in the Word and in prayer, put on the armour of God and grow in faith. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:14, "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."

Mary Peterson,
London, Ont.

What a refreshing contribution David Harris has made to the same-sex marriage debate! His October editorial is one of the most balanced, rational and reasoned set of arguments I've seen yet. Intelligent, thoughtful debate — especially one in a spirit of Christian love — must be based on tenable premises. Mr. Harris demolishes the less-than-sensible "arguments" neatly while avoiding the white heat of emotion that has overcooked so many such statements.

The CY2003 youth have the right idea: same-sex marriage is a societal right, if not a religious one. Each church must decide for itself, and the bill currently before the House of Commons allows for that.

Janet Mullin,
Fredericton

October's editorial gets off to a good start calling for "the truth spoken in love" and mentioning the Bible. Unfortunately, all the Scripture gets is a mention. Those of us who believe same-sex marriage runs counter to Scripture should not

be dismissed. You say "the Bible has little to say"; I beg to differ. Homosexuality rates not only a "thou shalt not" but also at least two stories (Genesis 18-19 and Judges 19-20).

Some Old Testament laws were for that time and place but not for now. A common test is to see if they are repeated in the New Testament. While the New Testament absolves us from keeping the ancient food laws and the seventh day as a Sabbath, it reaffirms the ban on homosexual behaviour (1 Corinthians 6:9).

A question to ponder is why a loving and merciful God would forbid homosexual activity. You mention a number of possible reasons but, in my view, dismiss them too readily. Perhaps God knows that the very things gay activists clamour for will make them miserable and kill them. Anyone who thinks homosexual men have not been a major cause of the spread of AIDS in Canada should look at the questionnaire for the Canadian Blood Service. The other main spreaders of this disease, IV drug users and heterosexuals with multiple partners, are also breaking God's laws and infecting many innocent victims (wives, children, blood recipients).

While some say God is punishing those who disobey, I prefer to think God knew what would happen and lovingly made laws to protect us. So are those who help promote the gay agenda actually hastening their demise?

Because we are all sinners, it is our duty and joy to reach out to other sinners in love and forgiveness. We are told to forgive again and again. But what do we have to offer those who come? We need to be a church where forgiveness is not only possible but also necessary.

While some homosexuals stridently demand that society change to suit them, others are willing to change. Many who are searching for God are not looking for a church that thinks God caters to the whims of special interest groups; they want a church that represents God as the solid rock.

As important as a correct decision on same-sex marriage is, it is really a side issue. The big question is, are we prepared to seek God's will and obey it,

refusing to alter God's inspired Word in the face of criticism and ridicule?

May God help us to obey the second great commandment: to love our neighbour as we should. And let us not forget the first: to love God.

Kellie Shand,
Victoria

Rather than polarize over sexual identities or gay rights, more people should experience what I, a heterosexual male, learned about myself in the past couple of years.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I wrote many letters to editors concerning community politics and stated my anti-homosexual opinions. However, in the late 1990s, I met a new friend about a dozen years my junior. When we met initially, he told me he was bisexual, thinking this would be less intense than being gay. Not long after, however, he admitted he was a homosexual. Sadly, on a few occasions (usually after hospitalization and/or some religious influence), he later told me he was not gay, that his homosexuality had been some sort of mental phase.

My new friend is compassionate, fun and simply a nice guy. Although I have occasionally told him I reject his sexual orientation and lifestyle, I let him know he is more than welcome around me. I express my concern that he is engaging in unsafe sexual practices because I'd like him to live a full lifetime. Unfortunately, I've rarely seen him in the past nine months and I worry about him.

Although I strongly believe homosexuality is unnatural — in God's eyes too — *no one* has the right to disrespect a gay person and give him a difficult time, let alone assault him physically or verbally, simply because of his sexual orientation. Since meeting my friend, some of my opinions have changed.

Frank G. Sterle, Jr.,
White Rock, B.C.

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

obituaries

Botjes, Gerty, 98 years old and a 65-year member of First Church, Chatham, Ont.

Congdon, Ruby, 92 years old and a 50-year member of First Church, Chatham, Ont.

Eagleson, Margaret, 87 years old and a long-time member of First Church, Chatham, Ont.

Foreman, Spence, passed away Sept. 6, 2003; former church school worker, elder for 50 years, trustee. Spence followed his beloved wife, **Helen**, also a faithful worker, who died suddenly on Aug. 21, 2003. Both were buried from their lifelong church, Riverdale Presbyterian, Toronto.

Huggan, George, 91, on Sept. 27, 2003; retired elder of Calvin, Toronto, where for many years he and his late wife, Mae, were active members. George was a wise and faithful elder. He served as treasurer of the congregation and was representative elder to East Toronto Presbytery, also serving as its treasurer for many years. Recognizing the value of church camps, he was active on the Glen Mohr Camp board and served as its treasurer. George is survived by his three daughters.

Johnston, Rev. Dr. Stuart, 85, on Aug. 10, 2003. As a student at Knox College, Stuart served at Calvin, Toronto, working especially with young adults and children. Here he met and married Marion, who predeceased him. Upon graduating from Knox, he served several congregations. He received his PhD from Edinburgh. Later he was secretary of the Bible Society in Montreal. At retirement, he returned to Toronto and worshipped at Calvin. He was a man who cared about others, loved a good story and was a great host. He is survived by his three daughters.

Peifer, Isabel, 88 years old and a long-time member of First Church, Chatham, Ont.

Rae, Alexander Reid, passed away in his 103rd year, July 2, 2003; elder and long-time faithful member at Riverdale Presbyterian Church, Toronto.

Roy, Agnes, 92, on Oct. 2, 2003, one of the first women elders ordained at Calvin, Toronto. She was an active member of session where she was known for her pastoral and administrative skills. Agnes served the national church on the committee that led to the ordination of women, the Board of Ministry, the personnel committee of the WMS and was chairperson of Ewart College. As executive secretary of the YWCA of Canada, she was known in Canada and throughout the world as an advocate for women and youth. During the summer, Agnes worshipped at Knox, Bracebridge, near her cottage.

Shillington, Verla, 97, a long-time member of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

St. Denis, Christine MacKay, passed away Oct. 25, 2003, in Gibsons, B.C., in her 98th year. Beloved wife of the late Rev. Dr. Fred St. Denis. Funeral service was held in Central Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, B.C., conducted by Rev. R.M. Pollock.

Thomson, David E., 69, on Oct. 8, 2003, an active elder at Calvin, Toronto. He was known for his patience, quiet wisdom, sense of humour, generosity, compassion and devotion to the church. He served his community as a baseball coach and was known for his fairness to all. As an engineer, he was known for his trustworthiness. He was a Christian gentleman. The son of the late Rev. Dr. E.A. Thomson, David is survived by his wife, Sue, his three children, four grandchildren and his mother, Edith Thomson.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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Ordinations and inductions

Rev. Amanda Currie, inducted, team minister, St. Andrew's, Saskatoon, Nov. 30.

Rev. Laura Kavanagh, inducted, Knox, Victoria, Nov. 25.

Crossword Solution

from page 50

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. GOLD | 8. MYRRH |
| 2. DREAM | 9. HOMAGE |
| 3. BETHLEHEM | 10. HOUSE |
| 4. EAST | 11. MESSIAH |
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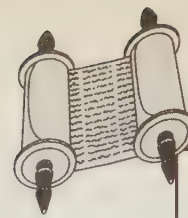
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called to wonder



Written by Jennifer O'Farrell,
St. Mark's Church, Don Mills, Ont.

It has been written by the prophet: "For from you, Bethlehem, shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Do you know the story about the Wise Men who came looking for a child? If you do, you can put the answers to the questions below into the puzzle. Find the story in your Bible at Matthew 2:1-12. The season of Epiphany begins on January 6th each year, 12 days after Christmas. The church celebrates the journey of the Wise Men. You will find no stable, no animals, no shepherds in this story. But like the Wise Men, you follow a star and come to an understanding of God's promises to all people.



Across

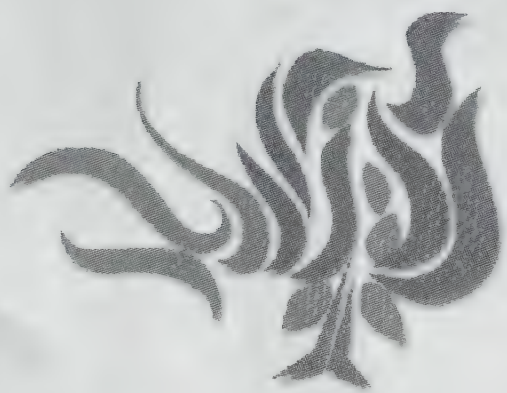
1. What was the first gift given to Jesus by the Wise Men?
3. What is the name of the town where Jesus was born?
7. What did the Wise Men follow?
8. What was the third gift?
11. What is another name for the long-expected ruler of Israel?
12. What was the name of the child whom the Wise Men found?
13. In what city did the king meet with the chief priests and scribes?
14. What was the name of the king in this story?

Down

2. How did the Wise Men know not to go back to tell the king they had found the child?
4. From which direction did the Wise Men travel?
5. What is the name of Jesus' mother?
6. What was the second gift given to Jesus?
9. What word in this story means to offer reverence and honour?
10. In what place did the Wise Men find Jesus?

See page 49 for the solution to this puzzle.

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PRESBYTERIAN Record

February 2004

Dead Sea treasures

Scrolls, artifacts make rare journey to Canada

Life after divorce

Healing ministry leads people to Christ

Denominations denounce indifference to anti-Semitism

Scholar chronicles a new reformation in Christianity





Gnosticism continues to seduce

It's a highly seductive idea: the chance to have a peek at the Book of Life, just to make sure your name is in it. Whew, made it!

Then think of the possibilities! Knowledge, as we say, is power. It is also at the root of one of the most enduring heresies of Christianity: that through some special knowledge, we can know with the same certainty that one plus one is two that our name is in the Book of Life.

In the first centuries after Christ, people who thought they had this knowledge were known as Gnostics (from a Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*). Although there has been a great deal written about them, especially in the past 20-25 years, we really know very little about them. It is likely some of Gnosticism's roots lie outside Christianity, but we know it infiltrated the faith.

Even the great St. Augustine, probably the most influential thinker in Western Christianity, was seduced by a form of Gnosticism for nine years in the late fourth century before his conversion to Christianity.

Gnostics could point to many biblical passages that seemed to support their position. For example, in John's Gospel, Jesus tells his followers that he has many things to tell them, but it is too much for them to handle at the time. He promises to send them the "spirit of truth" that will lead them into all truth. The world cannot receive this spirit, he says, "because it neither sees nor knows it; but you know it."

Mark records Jesus telling his disciples that "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables." Paul says: "We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden"

None of this will be news to the most careful readers of Scripture and certainly not to ministers and divinity students. Unfortunately, how such passages were — and still can be — misinterpreted seems itself to have remained a secret. Otherwise, such popular books on Gnosticism as *The Da Vinci Code* or Princeton professor Elaine Pagels' books, *The Gnostic Gospels* and *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas*, would not startle people half as much as they do.

Still, these books have made accessible some of the unusual — admittedly heretical — ideas that circulated in the early church and translated lost gospel accounts that tell different stories about Jesus' life. Far from being a threat to orthodox faith, they give a glimmer of the breadth of theological debate in the church's early years. In so doing, they help us avoid the trap of thinking that the way we articulate our central beliefs is the way it always was in the church.

As for some of the more fanciful fiction contained in some of these bestsellers, our columnist Andrew Faiz notes that there

is little new under the sun when it comes to most of these ideas, such as the one that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. While we can't know for certain that he wasn't, there is no reliable evidence to support this theory. In any case, what real difference would it make in the end?

Gnosticism that is dangerous is not found in works of fiction or idle speculation, it is found among those who substitute a robust faith with their own interpretation of the Bible. Like the old Gnostics, they think they alone possess the key to interpreting the Bible. Millions of people have been swayed by books and movies, for instance, that purport to decode the end of time. Others unveil biblical secrets to becoming rich. The theology they peddle has no room for difference of interpretation or God's mysterious grace.

The other extreme is as dangerous. Old Gnostics believed that spirit was good and bodies were bad. For them it was undignified to believe that God, a spirit, would join with humanity in the person of Jesus. They too have their modern counterparts among those who think it is repugnant to believe that Jesus was the divinely conceived God-man who died and rose again.

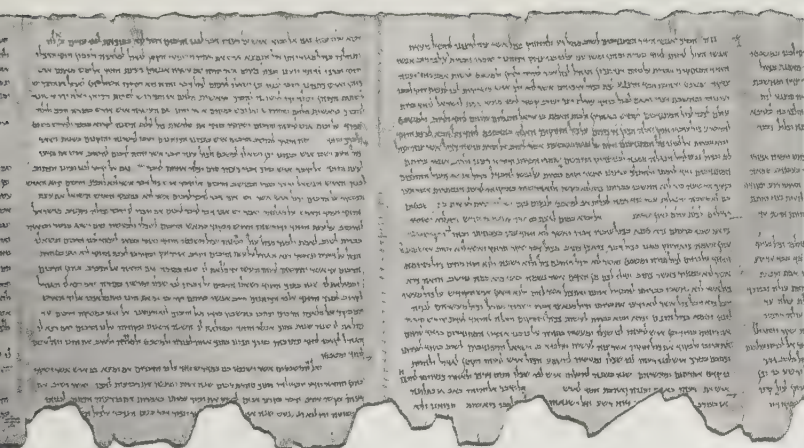
Like Gnostics of old, both types of modern gnostics mean well enough. And that's what is dangerous about their ideas — they seduce us because they seem so reasonable.

Interestingly, the best collection of Gnostic writings we have — including the only copies of some of the formerly lost gospels — were found in Egypt in 1945. Two years later, in caves to the west of the River Jordan near the Dead Sea (in what is now called the West Bank), shepherds found jars containing ancient scrolls of the Hebrew Bible and other religious texts. Fragments of the scrolls, which are still being worked on by scholars, were on display in Montreal earlier this year and are now being exhibited at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, near Ottawa in Gatineau, Que.

As for these new books on Gnosticism, if they help restore Mary Magdalene to her rightful place in the gospel story in Western Christianity, they will have done one good thing. Eastern Christians have long honoured Mary Magdalene for her pivotal role in the resurrection story: as the Apostle to the Apostles. Imagine that! A woman bringing the good news to all those men squabbling one day over who was to be first in line and now hiding in fear. There's certainly a tale to be told there!

David Harris

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Background: Dead Sea scroll (Community Rule scroll); Qumran; 1st c. BC - 1st c. AD

©Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Inset: Priestly benediction on an amulet; Jerusalem, Hinnom Valley; 7th c. BC; Silver Israel Antiquities Authority Collection

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How relevant is Scripture to debate?

Letters and articles on sexuality issues in the Presbyterian Church are (regrettably) becoming a monthly feature of the *Record*. I was stunned, however, to read the reported comments of Rev. Gwen Brown (Canadian News, December issue) at the special presbytery meeting of Huron-Perth: "We pick and choose which subordinate standards we enforce"; therefore, the question of subordinate standards has nothing to do with the issue of same-sex marriage.

Ms. Brown's easy dismissal of our doctrinal standards leaves me gasping. Are we in the same denomination? Did she not make ordination vows accepting the subordinate standards of our church, promising to uphold the doctrine therein? Does Chapter 24 of the *Westminster Confession* or Section 8.2 of *Living Faith* have no bearing on the subject, let alone the teaching of Holy Scripture? Or have we become so fuzzy in our thinking that theological debate rooted in our confessional heritage is irrelevant to the argument?

This is the heart of the matter. Revisionist, anti-confessional theologies cannot live indefinitely with those of us who hold to the authority of Scripture and to orthodox Christian doctrine as embodied in our Reformed confessions and catechisms. I wonder whether we can remain together as a denomination or whether all these *Record* articles and letters, epitomized in Ms. Brown's comments, are merely the prelude to an impending separation.

I hope with all my heart we can avoid the divorce court. I want us to stay together. But does God expect us to hang in there at all costs in the face of such diametrically opposed theologies?

Rev. Dr. J. Kevin Livingston,
Toronto

The most interesting part of the *Record* is Letters to the editor. November's letters turned on the issues of declining church membership, people affirming the gay/lesbian lifestyle as a natural tendency,

and whether or not we are to be faithful to Christ as the Lord of all nations or embrace the gods of all the nations.

Some have tried to address these unresolved questions in the Presbyterian Church by lumping us in with the larger interdenominational picture. However, in his letter to the seven churches, the apostle John cares enough to take the time to address the specific sins of each church.

Is there a specific sin in the Presbyterian Church that is sapping and draining the lifeblood of Presbyterians in numbers and spiritual hope? I have been convicted for a decade and a half that our greatest sin as Presbyterians is unfaithfulness in yielding to Christ as the Lord of all. Because of this, we are affirming sinful tendencies and God is not entrusting to us the blessing of renewed hope and the joy that new converts bring to congregations. We have been lukewarm for too long, and I am convinced God is judging us.

Ron Benty,
Creston, B.C.

The homosexuality debate in our country and churches is not new. It is not about

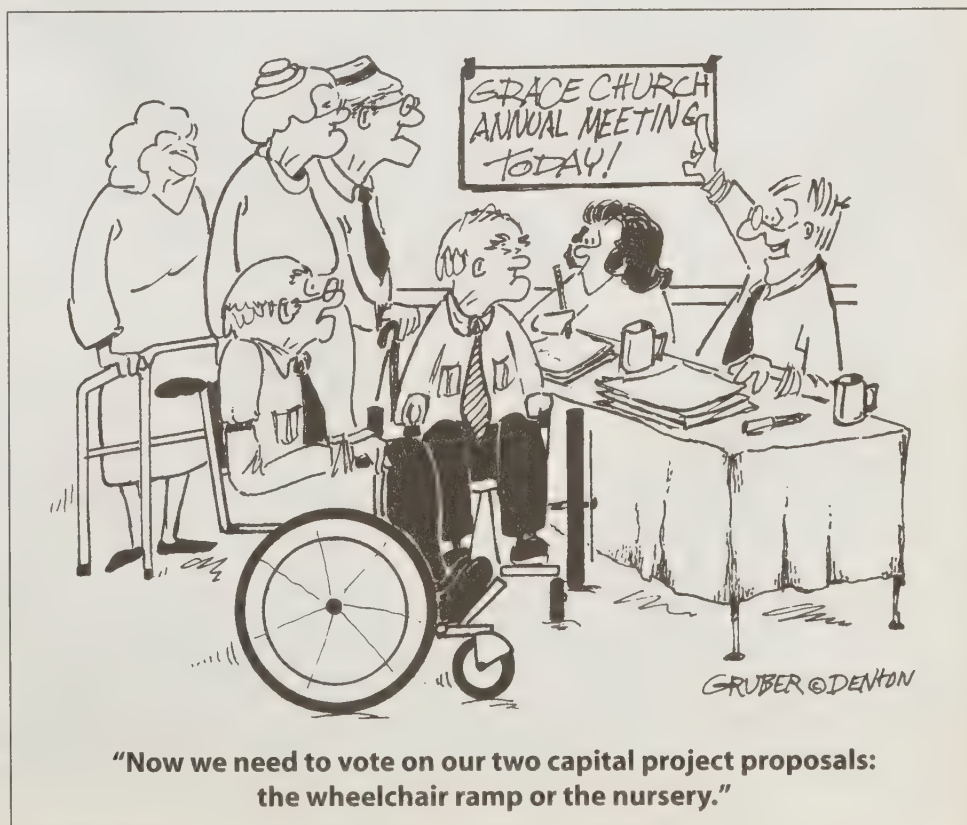
accepting or rejecting people; it is about being drawn into disobedience to God's commands and being encouraged to exchange our knowledge of God's Word for a lie. We are using precious time and money discussing this issue, and it is dividing our ranks and weakening our Christian influence in the world — time, money and unity that could be used to spread the gospel as Christ commanded.

The church must not fall prey to this scheme of the evil one. We are to resist the devil, draw near to God, stand firm and uphold his Word. Each moral value compromised accelerates the deterioration of our churches and our land. This is only one step and, unfortunately, not the first in the moral decline. God will not be mocked by our mushy excuses — we will reap what we sow.

Marilyn Evans,
Coaldale, Alta.

Resurrecting dry bones

I have spent 27 years ministering within the Presbyterian Church. My ministry has taken me to a four-point rural charge, a large multi-staffed inner-city congre-



gation, a small city congregation and, at present, I am an associate missionary on loan to the Church of Scotland serving a mission point in the Bahamas. I have travelled the road of flipcharts, overheads and power points as committee after committee has tried to deal with dwindling numbers and new statements of faith — all in an attempt to resurrect the valley of “dry bones.”

The concern of dwindling membership has been a problem for years. What saddens me of late is the attempt to correct the problem not by going back to the Scriptures as the Reformers did but rather by sacrificing the faith on the altar of religious tolerance. Look at the solutions some have suggested in the *Record*: experiment with new forms of worship, explore interfaith communication, discover new forms of spirituality, invite people of other faiths to church services and functions (*to share Jesus as the only way? or did the writer have something else in mind?*), get rid of the thought that Jesus is the only way as there is no fool-proof test to prove he is, seek out new lights of revelation (*like John Spong?*) and, if you have a problem with Scripture (especially Jesus’ words in John), simply follow the lead of the one who said, “I don’t believe Jesus said them.”

In the New Testament church, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). What led to the phenomenal growth of at least 3,000 in one day? Acts 2 reports: leaders were filled with the Holy Spirit, leaders spoke with boldness, a fulfillment of prophecy, a belief in the Resurrection,

acceptance of Jesus as both Lord and Christ, a willingness to repent, a desire for study and fellowship, and a sense of awe about the faith. To those who prefer to treat these texts as they would the words of Jesus by saying they don’t believe Luke wrote them, I leave you with your dry bones. But if we desire growth within the church, we must return to the roots of our faith. We must go back, as the Reformers did, to that which will

always stand the test of time: “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Rev. John Fraser,
Freeport, Grand Bahama

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

Leaning Against the Rock at the Bottom of the Field

It’s like an anchor
though I’ve no clue what it’s holding fast.
Not the clouds
for they move generously
at the slightest puff of wind.
Nor the weeds that sprout from its shadow,
creep ever sunward.
And not me,
because bone creak,
muscle ache,
keep my head informed
this vessel’s moving.
It can’t keep paint from peeling,
fiery love from cooling,
people from coming and going.
Maybe it just binds frame to picture ...
as hard and blunt
as here is life
and here’s the living in it.
I lean against the rock
for it’s a constant that will have me.

— John Grey



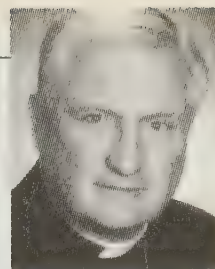
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Ukraine needs our support

Missionaries, development staff are a way for us to show love

Much of the month of February is in the season of Epiphany on the church calendar — a time when the church gives particular attention to its missionary and evangelical responsibilities. A small part of February 2004 is also in the season of Lent — a time when Christians reflect on the selflessness and compassion of Jesus and the implications of these two characteristics for his followers.

In my thinking upon the meeting of these two seasons in the month that includes Presbyterian World Service and Development Sunday, and during our year emphasizing spirituality, some things I have read come to mind. St. John of the Cross wrote: “When the evening of life comes we will be judged on love.” Walter Brueggeman has remarked: “Communion with God can’t be celebrated without attention to the nature of the community.” And a newspaper article stated that our society will be judged on the basis of how it regarded and treated the weakest and most vulnerable in the community.

Without a doubt, a rich Christian spirituality is cultivated in the church and within individuals when sustained attention is given to the imitation of the compassion and selflessness of Jesus. Through Presbyterian World Service and Development, we have the opportunity to imitate these characteristics by supporting projects that give aid to vulnerable and suffering folk and help communities and individuals gain a sense of dignity and the joy of hope.

In late September 2003, my wife, Chris, and I visited Hungarian Reformed Christians in Hungary, Romania and the western part of Ukraine as well as four Presbyterian staff in that part of Central Europe. In Ukraine, we were made aware of the dehumanizing and oppres-

sive features of the Communist regime that collapsed 13 years ago. We also encountered conditions that were sobering and perspective-changing for us. Poverty, chronic unemployment (sometimes as high as 90 per cent), gravely inadequate access to poor-quality medical resources and facilities, excessive bureaucracy, and schools with woefully inadequate resources are only a few of the conditions. Some unemployed folk in desperation engage in alternative forms of income generation such as smuggling (gasoline and cigarettes) and prostitution. These activities are heavily controlled by organized crime. Consequently, the Mafia’s

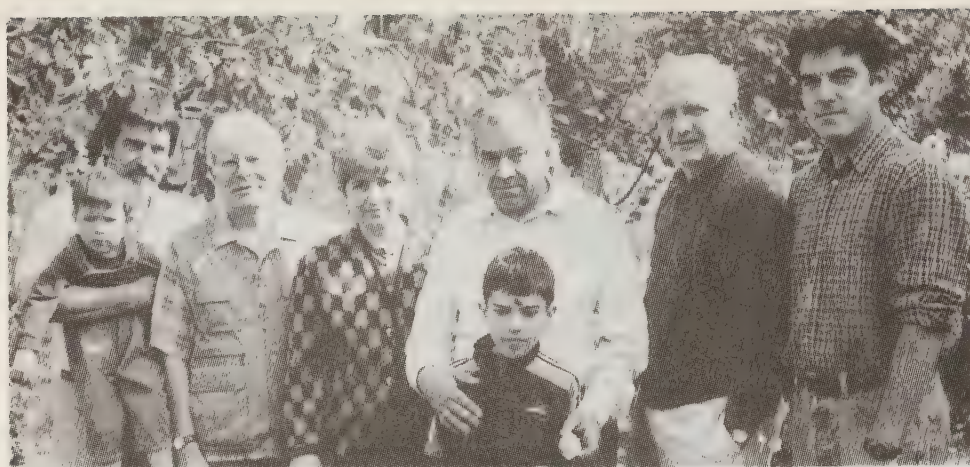
involvement in most aspects of the Ukrainian way of life and its influence in both the public and private spheres of community life result in profound amounts of corruption.

Two Presbyterian staff, Dr. David Pandy-Szekeres and Steve Ross, are located in Ukraine. They fulfill a variety of duties with the Reformed Church of the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. David has significant responsibilities in relationship to the residential schools operated by the church, particularly for procuring financial resources. He also serves as the convener of a committee responsible for the implementation of a project of the



Photo by Ron Wallace

A school farm in Nagydobrony, Ukraine, provides food for students attending the Hungarian Reformed Church high school in that town. Students come from surrounding towns to attend the boarding school.



In the town of Nagydobrony, in the western part of Ukraine, Presbyterian Church staff members meet with Bishop László Horkay: (L-R) Dr. David Pandey-Szekeres holding his daughter, Julia; Rev. Dr. Ron Wallace, associate secretary for International Ministries; Mrs. Horkay; Bishop Horkay with his grandson; Rev. Sandy McDonald, Moderator; Steve Ross.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank of which PWS&D is a member. The project was developed in the wake of the severe spring floods in 2001 that affected 300,000 people and destroyed roads, homes and fields. This flooding decimated an already deprived and vulnerable region. The project assists people to begin the slow process of returning to traditional forms of livelihood, to reduce the small landholder's vulnerability to floods through a network of "dry" high-quality seed banks, and to distribute the annually produced excess seed to small landholding farmers. The project included provision for technical knowledge and access to quality wheat, corn and rye/grain seeds through regionally grown seed banks maintained on church land.

Steve Ross coordinates part of this project. I was touched by what he wrote recently about his work, revealing both the value of the project and the difficult conditions under which folk have to live:

The fall of 2002 was terribly wet. Therefore, the seed was not planted until early December. It was never really given a chance to grow before the snow and ice came. The winter was long and harsh. We then received two weeks of spring, and then moved right into a heat wave in May. However, the summer proved to be the driest on record, with blazing heat. The wheat that we had planted in order to harvest and distribute had little chance of success. The weather did not co-operate, so we had to distribute what we were

given. We finally gave wheat seed in 100-kg to 250-kg increments, depending on farm size, to 183 small farmers who were affected by devastating floods in 1998 and 2001.

As we distributed the seed from the warehouse, I was able to watch some of the people who were receiving the seed. Of course, everyone was happy to receive the wheat because it is of a very good quality. However, the poorer farmers were more excited to be acquiring free wheat seed. This was really evident among elderly farmers. While the younger generations have different possibilities in making money, the only means of making a living for an elderly citizen is through agriculture. Therefore, it should have been little surprise to me when I saw an old lady praying in the lineup while she waited for her wheat seed. I did not really understand until it was her turn to be registered. She gave her passport as identification (an old one that still displayed the Soviet symbol of the hammer and the sickle). As one of the project's team members opened the passport, a 20 hryvnya note (local currency in Ukraine equivalent to \$5 Cdn) fell to the table. She was asked why there was money in the passport. She responded by simply stating, "I have to pay, don't I?" She was trying to bribe us.

The more I thought about the needless bribe from the elderly lady, the sadder it became. I realized this is what it was like for her throughout

her whole life. Having to bribe an official to receive what you wanted or needed was and, unfortunately in many cases, is still the situation in Ukraine. Because of shortages of everything, the black market has become the most common way of doing business. Because consumers usually outnumber the amount of available needed products, the sale usually goes to the highest bidder, with the managers pocketing the extra money. This theory is just "supply and demand"; however, when the same economic practices are taking place with governmental officials, where the individual is forced to pay somebody's pocket to receive basic services, then there is a problem. This is why she could not understand that she was being *given* the wheat. We explained to her that we were a charitable organization, and that it was not necessary for her to pay us. We wished her well and told her we hoped God would bless her with a good crop of wheat.

I encourage you to remember David, Steve and the folk they serve in your prayers. May God find us faithful in our prayers for the vulnerable in our world and active in our demonstration of selflessness and compassion through our support of projects that alleviate suffering and create a measure of hope.

More about our Central European journey in the March issue.

Sandy McDonald

Moderator's itinerary

February 4 (evening)

St. Matthew's, Saint John, N.B.

February 8

St. Andrew's, St. John's, Nfld.

February 15

St. Andrew's, Kitchener, Ont.

February 29

Paulin Memorial, Windsor, Ont.

March 1-3

Life and Mission Agency committee
Crieff Hills, Puslinch, Ont.

March 7

St. Andrew's, Perth, Ont.

Presbyterian receives distinguished military honour

Donald Corbett, a member of Grace Church, Orleans, Ont., was inducted as an Officer of the Order of Military Merit in a ceremony officiated by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson at Rideau Hall, Ottawa, last June

Maj. Corbett joined the Canadian Forces in 1972 and graduated from the Royal Military College, Kingston, Ont., in 1976. He has served Canada as a military engineer for 31 years in Canadian locations and around the world, including reconnaissance and fact-finding missions in the Balkans and the Middle East, and hurricane relief in the Caribbean. Currently stationed in Ottawa, he is the manager of four major projects that will establish new military capabilities deemed essential following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Maj. Corbett has also served his community in a variety of ways. He has been involved in scouting since 1961 and as a Scout leader for 25 years. In 2000, he was named Citizen of the Year by the Queenswood Heights Community Organization and was recognized for his volunteer service to youth by the City of Orleans. He was also appointed to the Order of the Caribou for his work at the 2001 Canadian Scout Jamboree. An accomplished musician, Maj. Corbett sings in the Grace choir and sometimes serves as choir director. He has played in many pipe bands across the country and has assisted in the development of the newly formed RCMP Pipes and Drums (National Capital Region) in which he serves as Pipe Sergeant. Last May, he received the Queen's Jubilee Medal in recognition of his work with the RCMP band.



Maj. Donald Corbett receives the Order of Military Merit from Governor General Adrienne Clarkson as Gen. R. Henault, Chief of Defence Staff, looks on.

Renewal Fellowship finds funds to publish Channels

A shortfall in income from givings to The Renewal Fellowship Within The Presbyterian Church in Canada, which delayed the publication of the organization's magazine *Channels* for the past several months, has been resolved thanks to donations from supporters. The issue, which focuses on human sexuality, was mailed out early last month.



'It was important to get these points of view out to people'

Rev. Calvin Brown

Rev. Calvin Brown, executive director of the organization and editor of *Channels*, says the issue had been planned for some time but they couldn't afford to publish it. He did not know why financial support for the organization had fallen off.

"I believe this edition of *Channels* on human sexuality approaches things from angles that are rarely heard in the public or even church media," Mr. Brown says. "It was important to get these points of view out to people who want to look at many of the issues. Of course, we make no claim to cover all the topics or all the points of view, but I believe this can make a significant contribution to the discussion."

(More information on the Renewal Fellowship and *Channels* can be found on the organization's website: <http://renewalfellowship.presbyterian.ca>.)



Canadian Brian Johnston conducts the enthusiastic Hungarian Theological Male Choir of Romania.

Romanian choir continues to perform through changes

Many readers of the *Record* will remember the Hungarian Theological Male Choir of Romania from its Ontario visit in Aug. and Sept. 2001. Since that tour, the choir membership has changed considerably as many students have graduated and are now serving as pastors in various locations throughout Transylvania. Recruits have been gathered from the new students, who are quickly learning the choir's repertoire with the help of the more experienced choristers.

In July 2003, the choir was invited by the Canadian embassy in Bucharest to participate in the Canada Day celebrations, which included singing some songs in Romanian. In November, a special concert was organized in Sovata, a town 150 km from Cluj. This varied program was part of a benefit concert established to support needy students lacking funds for further education. An opera evening was also organized in November in the sanctuary of the Hungarian

Reformed Institute. Brian Johnston, the choir's director, says it was a wonderful experience for the choir to collaborate with some fine professional singers from both the Hungarian and Romanian communities. Mr. Johnston, whose home church is Knox, Waterloo, Ont., continues to be supported in his work by Presbyterians Sharing.

Have You Heard?, a CD recorded during the 2001 Ontario tour, is available from The Book Room at church offices.

Digital hymn device worries organists

LONDON, ENGLAND — Human bell-ringers were first to fall to digitalization; now the church organist is coming up against computerized church music — a possible boon where musical skills are scarce.

This digital instrument is the size of a laptop computer, weighs 1.8 kg and is powered by two chips. It will produce more than 2,300 hymn tunes, including such traditional and modern favourites as Jerusalem and Shine, Jesus, Shine, in a range of instrument sounds from organ to piccolo.

The Church of England, the country's largest denomination, faces a "marked shortage" of organists, says Helen Foster of the Royal School of Church Music. "It can be difficult to find people with the time and the skills, which may include leading a choir and a worship band as well as playing the organ," she says.

But Martin Phelps, the device's retailer, said: "I would never call the Digital Hymnal a replacement for the human organist, but it's a wonderful first-aid kit."

Up to 10 hymns can be programmed in advance of a worship service. The Digital Hymnal will deal with emergencies in a church service that human organists often face. It can be told to speed up, slow down or add another verse. It will also change key and tempo without complaint, and add amens if desired.

ENI

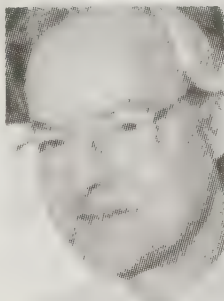


Church needs 'change of heart' to end homophobia, says Moderator

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland used part of his Christmas sermon to accuse the Kirk of reinforcing hatred of gay people. He told a congregation in Aberdeen that the church and the rest of Scotland must shake off its homophobia.

'How may we be set free from such a compulsive and consuming obsession?'

Right Rev. Iain Torrance



"These are spiritual matters because hatred may only be cured by a change of heart," said the Right Rev. Professor Iain Torrance. In his sermon at St. Machar's Cathedral, Prof. Torrance said that there had been a 200 per cent increase in 2001-2002 of cases of syphilis among those having

gay sex but that sufferers were still too afraid to seek help. "That fear in turn testifies to a persistent homophobia in society at large," the Moderator said.

"It is almost 2004," the sermon continued, "but gay young people in Scotland are four times more likely than others to report a serious suicide attempt. We all require a change of heart because the church not least has contributed to the prevailing homophobic mindset."

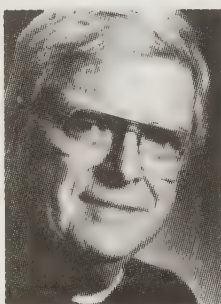
Prof. Torrance has said he would not be opposed to openly gay ministers. On the day that a murdered teenager was buried, the church's press office received 38 calls in 10 minutes regarding the Moderator's views on gay ministers. "Which was the event of greater importance?" Prof. Torrance asked. "How may we be set free from such a compulsive and consuming obsession?"

BBC News

Toronto School of Theology appoints ecumenist-in-residence

The Toronto School of Theology has announced the appointment of the Most Rev. Michael Peers as the school's first ecumenist-in-residence. In this new position, Dr. Peers, who has served as the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada since 1986, will participate in the scholarly, social and worship life of the member colleges. He will serve as a guest lecturer on the history and practice of contemporary ecumenism, provide support and guidance to faculty and students, and speak on behalf of TST in churches and other public settings. The one-year appointment will begin July 1, 2004.

The Toronto School of Theology is a federation of seven member colleges, four affiliate schools and eight participating denominations, including the Presbyterian Church.



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More than two millennia after they were written, the tiny black ink strokes still read clearly, proclaiming their message to people with the time and patience to study them

Scrolls come to Canada

Canadian Museum of Civilization exhibits Dead Sea treasures

by Michael Munnik



Dead Sea scroll
(Community Rule scroll)
Qumran
1st century BC - 1st century AD
©Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Peter Flint's passion for ancient Jewish texts is infectious. He doesn't fit the stereotype of a research scholar — aloof, awkward or boring. In fact, his enthusiasm is almost comical.

"I have held the oldest copy of Psalms in the world in my hands," Dr. Flint says. "It's like holding Wayne Gretzky's very first hockey stick."

That's a lofty comparison indeed. But Flint, a professor at Trinity Western University in Langley, B.C., is something of a Gretzky himself in scrolls research. He is one of only three professors from Canadian universities working with an international group of scholars, editing the scrolls and bringing their secrets to the world. The others are Dr. Martin Abegg, also from Trinity Western, and Dr. Eileen Schuller from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont.

Flint says Canada scored a hat trick with an exhibit currently showing at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Que., across the river from Ottawa. Three of the Dead Sea scrolls are on display until April 12 alongside artifacts dating as far back as 1200 BC. Two of the scrolls — the War Scroll and Isaiah B (a copy of the Book of Isaiah) — have never before left Israel. And the Community Rule scroll has remained in Israel for almost 50 years since its purchase from an American collection.

It was a coup for the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History, which arranged with the Israel Museum in Jerusalem to bring these pieces to Canada. They first showed in Montreal and will return to Israel when the Ottawa exhibit is finished. "We're really very lucky," says Flint. "This exhibit will put Canada on the map."

The exhibit guides you through both the ritual and the daily life of Jews in the time of the First Temple, built by King Solomon (970-928 BC). Artifacts from the Second Temple period (536 BC – AD 70), after the exile, focus on the religious aspects of that time. The exhibit finishes with the Sefer Torah, a gift to the first Jewish community in Canada in 1779. Its presence indicates that, ancient as these artifacts may be, the story they tell continues over centuries, crossing oceans into our Canadian context.

The scrolls, however, are the centrepiece of the exhibit. They are displayed in a small chamber, bridging the First and Second Temple areas of the hall. A security guard stands nearby. Here, the music is quiet and few conversations are heard. The lights — never very bright — dim periodically to near blackness to keep the documents from fading. The room demands patience from those who come to see the scrolls.

The three pieces on display are surprising for a few reasons. There are only fragments of each scroll, and they are not the fragments that were shown in Montreal. This, too, extends the life of the artifacts. The Community Rule is the largest and clearest document; by contrast, the dark fragments of Isaiah B lie in their display case like a South Pacific archipelago.

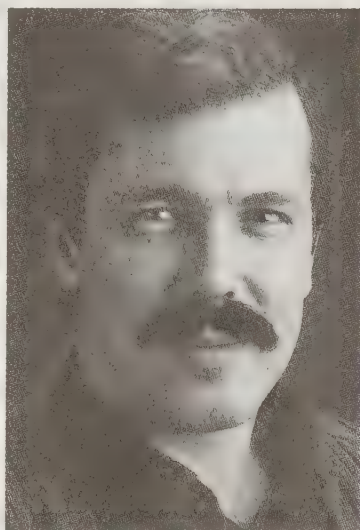
I had expected these documents to be bigger, more physically impressive. But the more I examined them, the clearer my sense became that their authority comes from just how small they are and how attentive their creators were to the fine details of the script. More than two millennia later, the tiny black ink strokes still read clearly, proclaiming their message to people with the time and patience to study them. Those of us filtering through in an afternoon can only look and wonder, and marvel at their secrets.



The first seven Qumran scrolls were found stored in jars such as this one.
1st century BC - 1st century AD
©Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Inscribed pomegranate, Ivory
Associated with the Temple of Solomon
Jerusalem
8th century BC
©Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Dr. Jean-Luc Pilon
curator,
Canadian Museum of Civilization



Priestly benediction on an amulet
Jerusalem, Hinnom Valley
7th century BC
Silver
Israel Antiquities Authority Collection

The scrolls hold many mysteries, even for those who tend them daily. Dr. Jean-Luc Pilon is the curator of the exhibit. He says he is mystified by how he got the job. His field of knowledge is Aboriginal and Northern Canadian history.

"My area of expertise is about as far away from this as possible," he says. "That led me to ask, 'What am I doing here?'"

Indeed, the arid desert of Israel is far from the remote landscape of trees, rocks and permafrost. The Dead Sea scrolls, found more than 50 years ago in clay jars left in caves near Qumran, would never have survived the harsh winters and humid summers of the Canadian North.

"What I discovered, the more I worked with this exhibit, is that this is a story I know," Pilon says. "As I went through the material, little bells of familiarity came through."

This became clear to him on New Year's Day last year. Pilon, a Roman Catholic, attended the New Year's mass at Notre Dame Basilica on Sussex Drive in Ottawa. "The blessing that day was from Numbers. It was the same priestly blessing that is described on an ancient amulet here on display." The Scripture is the Aaronic Blessing, and the amulet that bears it dates back to the seventh century BC. It is the oldest fragment of biblical verse yet discovered. Pilon was surprised to connect this ancient fragment of silver no bigger than a human thumb with the practices of his own faith.

He learned that the benediction is not only part of the yearly liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church, it is also a commonly used passage in the synagogue and several other churches use the verse, often while celebrating the Eucharist. Many Presbyterian churches sing or speak the blessing during baptisms.

"This story is of great interest to a wide range of people," says Pilon.

That interest has grown since the 1990s, when scroll research was opened to a wider public. Scholarship had previously been restricted to a secretive "scroll cartel." Dr. Martin Abegg, a colleague of Prof. Flint at Trinity Western, was one of the scholars responsible for breaking the cartel and broadening the field of researchers.

"I think we've entered a new era of interest in the scrolls," says Prof. Abegg. He attributes some of that interest to public curiosity about old spiritual things. "Even for me, there's a bit of the Indiana Jones aura here," he says. The idea persists that the scrolls still have some secrets to reveal; for instance, treasures described in the Treasure Scroll have yet to be found.

"But I think the main interest is religious. The *Left Behind* books captured an audience. And it's the same kind of audience that finds the scrolls compelling."

Abegg should know. His expertise is the War Scroll, which describes an apocalyptic vision similar to that described by John in Revelation. Part of what makes the Dead Sea scrolls valuable, says Abegg, is that they show "the same sort of theology in a Jewish group 200 to 300 years before Christianity ... about the Messianic age and the war at the End Times."

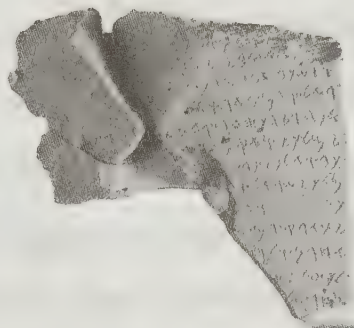
The emergence of Christianity in Jewish culture, the diversity of Jewish religious thought and the validation of the Bible — all of this highlights the importance of the scrolls and this exhibit for Jean-Luc Pilon.

"We are really lucky," he says. "These pieces will never again be gathered here, telling the fullness of the story we're telling here." **R**

Michael Munnik, an Ottawa writer, works as a producer and reporter for CBC Radio. He is a member of St. Andrew's, Nanaimo, B.C., but attends Knox Church in Ottawa.

Dead Sea scrolls lecture series

The Canadian Museum of Civilization is offering a free lecture series on eight consecutive Thursdays, Feb. 5 to March 25, at 6:30 p.m. Leading specialists, including Dr. Peter Flint and Dr. Martin Abegg, will speak on the Dead Sea scrolls, what these ancient manuscripts reveal about religious life in Israel 2,000 years ago, and their relation to the roots of Judaism and Christianity. More information is available at the website www.civilization.ca or by calling 1-800-555-5621.



Inscribed Stele, Tell Dan, referring to the "House of David"
9th century BC
©Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Dr. Adolfo Roitman, curator of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, with the War Scroll.

Church leaders speak out against anti-Semitism in Canada

by Tom Dickey

Believing any time is a good time to speak out against anti-Semitism, nine church leaders, including Rev. Sandy McDonald, Moderator of the 129th General Assembly, have issued an open letter challenging "all churches, parishes, congregations and people of goodwill to find ways and means to expose and eradicate anti-Semitism within and from Canadian society." The timing of the letter's release, facilitated through the Canadian Council of Churches, was chosen to coincide with the Dec. 10 anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the beginning of Hanukkah on Dec. 19.

Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, says there was no specific incident that prompted the letter but rather a mounting sense of the increase and omnipresence of anti-Semitic acts.

Stephen Allen, associate secretary for Justice Ministries, Life and Mission Agency, and chair of the council's justice and peace committee, agrees. He points to statistics gathered by the Jewish organization B'nai Brith as "incontrovertible" evidence that acts of anti-Semitism are increasing. Unless you are part of a minority, it is not possible to understand the number of ways prejudice

can appear in daily life, he says.

Although the letter is not an official document of the Canadian Council of Churches, Dr. Hamilton says it is not unusual for church representatives to use the organization as a kind of conduit to make their views known to the public. The fact that some members of the CCC did not sign the letter has to do with denominational language, polity and the timing of the letter more than anything else.

Along with the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the letter was signed by leaders from the Anglican, Baptist, Christian (Disciples of Christ),

A church leaders' letter against anti-Semitism to the churches of Canada, the Jewish community in Canada, and to all people of goodwill ...

We, the leaders of nine Christian churches in Canada, speak to you together through the facilitation of the Canadian Council of Churches, of which we all are members. In this letter, we are addressing one situation only, which is a Canadian one. While we recognize that there are other serious situations here in Canada and throughout the world, which demand the faithful attention of all people of goodwill, we have become profoundly concerned and deeply dismayed by the alarming increase of anti-Semitism in Canada. This anti-Semitism has taken many forms, including violence against Jewish persons, simply because of their ethnic or religious background, and the desecration of holy places and cemeteries. We have become alerted to this resurgent evil through our own witness, through the media, and through the concern of others, including members of the Court of Appeal for Ontario and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

We, the undersigned, representing many of the Christian churches in Canada, are fully aware of and deeply grateful for the Jewish roots of our faith traditions. In the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 11, verses 17 and 18, St. Paul wrote:

"You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree that were made to be a part of a cultivated olive tree ... you enjoy the blessings that come from being part of that cultivated tree ... Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. Its roots are supporting you."

(Contemporary English Version)

Therefore we would declare our unqualified gratitude for the gifts of the Jewish people to world civilization in general and Canadian society in particular.

We acknowledge with sadness and regret, and with no little shame, the historic burden of persecution, which Jews have borne throughout western history; a burden all too often inflicted by Christians, who have maligned Jesus' own people in Jesus' name.

We challenge all churches, parishes, congregations and people of goodwill to find ways and means to expose and eradicate anti-Semitism within and from Canadian society.

We must not be silent.

We urge all within our church communities and, indeed, all Canadians to exercise the greatest diligence on behalf of our Jewish friends and neighbours, that when they come under attack, and their sacred places are desecrated, that they find true solidarity in establishing security and in redressing wrong.

We invite all our people, where the opportunity exists, to become acquainted with our Jewish brothers and sisters and with their places of worship in communities from coast to coast to coast, celebrating all that we share with our Jewish friends and neighbours, and respecting our differences.

We commit ourselves to demonstrating not only through words but through united action, our determination to confront anti-Semitism on every front.

This we pledge in the unwavering conviction of the eternal love of Almighty God for all peoples and nations, in the unwavering conviction that we are, Jews and Christians alike, brothers and sisters, children of one God, heirs in faith of Abraham and Sarah.

Evangelical Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic and United churches, and the Salvation Army.

The letter has received public support from two well-known Presbyterians. In an opinion piece published in the Dec. 28 edition of the *Toronto Star*, John Morden, a retired judge of the Court of Appeal for Ontario, and Sandra Demson, a family lawyer and currently one of three vice-presidents of the Canadian Council of Churches, lament the “overwhelming indifference” with which the Canadian media greeted the letter. Mr. Morden and Ms. Demson, both members of Rosedale Church, Toronto, call the letter an “important — even historic” act of interdenominational solidarity in “opposing anti-Semitism with the most compelling concepts in the clearest possible language.” They believe the fact that such an open letter was even necessary to be a “stinging comment” on the deplorable rise of anti-Semitism.

Mr. Morden and Ms. Demson’s article poses the question “Did we learn nothing from the Holocaust?” They conjecture that indifference to anti-Semitism stems, perhaps, from its ability “to reappear in new forms that insinuate themselves into our times.” Today, anti-Semitism can be masked as anti-Zionism or anti-Israel. According to Mr. Morden and Ms. Demson, these euphemisms should not be tolerated any more than the more obvious desecrations of Jewish cemeteries or memorials, attacks on synagogues, or hate mail on the Internet. They are all equally unacceptable and equally threatening.

“Just as dangerous is the silence of good people,” say Mr. Morden and Ms. Demson. To those who ask what can be done on a day-to-day level, they have a number of suggestions. When you hear anti-Semitic jokes or statements — speak out. When you see a Jewish person, especially a child, experiencing a hate-motivated verbal attack — step in. If you know a Jewish sacred property has been defaced — lend a hand to help fix it.

Mr. Morden and Ms. Demson conclude their article with the hope that 2004 will be the year all Christians and Jews can say “Not here, never again” and mean it. The only true Christian response is that anti-Semitism is wrong. **R**

You can help

Photo: Chris Herlinger, ACT



A young girl in Bam, Iran, wrapped up against the cold, stands in front of rubble left from the December 26 earthquake. PWS&D has been helping provide relief supplies for earthquake survivors.

When the city of Bam in Iran was hit by a massive earthquake on December 26, 2003, PWS&D was able to respond.

PWS&D provides Action by Churches Together (ACT) with funds for immediate response to such crises. As an initial response, ACT released \$50,000 US to help ACT members in the region provide survivors with food, water, blankets, emergency shelter and psychosocial assistance. By December 31, tents equipped with paraffin ovens arrived for distribution to people with special needs — mostly seniors, orphans and sick people.

Ongoing assistance will be needed in the coming years to help rebuild communities devastated by the earthquake. “This is at least a five- to seven-year commitment,” explains Malik Khodaverdian, Middle East Council of Churches emergency liaison in Iran.

Help provide hope for people in Iran. Make a donation to PWS&D.

PWS&D’s relief and development programs operate because people and congregations financially support the work. PWS&D receives no funds from *Presbyterians Sharing*.... Support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) helps make your gift go a long way.

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50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, Ontario M3C 1J7

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E-mail: pwsd@presbyterian.ca Website: www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd

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Program helps divorced find healing, hope and

Participants find the Bible and Christian faith helpful, not condemning

by Amy Sedlezky

ABOUT ONE IN THREE MARRIAGES IN CANADA FAILS — a startling statistic that has harmful effects on couples and their children. Believed to be one of the most stressful events a person can endure, the dissolution of a marriage brings pain, guilt, sadness and confusion to all involved, in addition to the financial difficulties, custody battles and court proceedings that often ensue. The lengthy ordeal leaves deep wounds that need to be healed — but sometimes never do.

“People are hurting,” said Sandra Anderson, who leads a recovery program for separated and divorced people at Paris Presbyterian Church in southern Ontario. She said not all counselling seems to be hitting the right chord and a more meaningful approach is needed. “You have to add the spiritual aspect. You’re moving from one flesh to tearing that apart. The soul is hurt, and the only way to heal is through God. He’s the only one who has a chance.”

Separated in 1998, Ms. Anderson’s divorce was finalized in March 2001. That fall, she heard about a DivorceCare

program being held in Brantford at Brant Community Church — the only group in the area at the time. After going through the program, she was convinced of the healing it promoted and felt compelled to help others who were going through the pain and brokenness of a separation or divorce. She presented the idea at her church and gained the overwhelming support of the congregation and session. The fourth program wrapped up last November. “When it was first approved, I don’t think they realized it was so biblically based; but when I made a presentation, it opened their eyes,” she said.

The 13-week course attracts all kinds of people, ranging from those who have been separated for a week to some being divorced for 10 years. Ages range from 20 to 70, with an average of 12 people attending per session. Held on Friday nights — a time of heightened loneliness for many who are divorced — the sessions strive to show people they are not alone in their struggles. “We live in such a couple-oriented society that divorced people often feel out of place,” said Ms. Anderson. The group offers participants a time for socializing, camaraderie and friendship. The approach seems to be

people Christ



FEAR

ANGER

SADNESS

working; there are now more than 100 groups in Toronto and the surrounding areas, with some active groups in Western Canada as well.

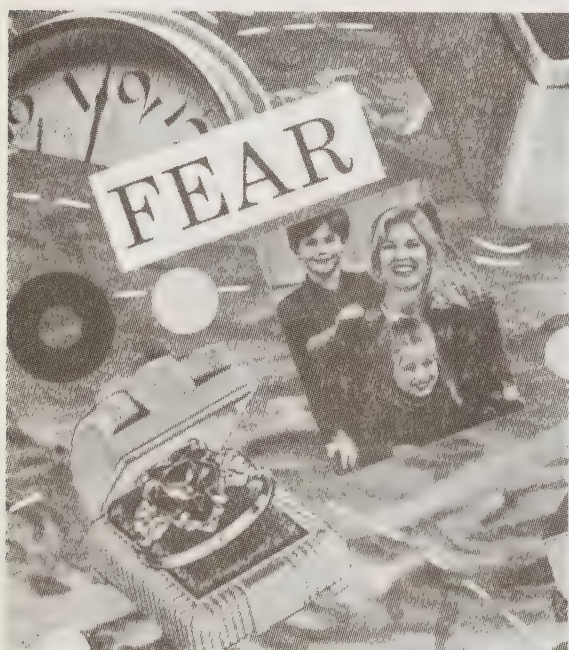
Fulfilling a need

DivorceCare is the brainchild of Steve Grissom, a resident of North Carolina who was divorced in the mid-'80s. A ministry of the non-denominational, non-profit, church-equipping organization Church Initiative, DivorceCare has become a ministry of more than 8,000 churches in the United States, Canada and 20 other countries since its beginnings in 1994. Tapes and materials are sent to congregations that request the

something? And what I heard was, 'Well, Steve, why don't you?'" By that point, he was remarried and began praying about this new possibility. Eventually, he decided God was leading him to start DivorceCare.

The path to healing

Classes focus on topics such as loneliness, depression, anger, new relationships, children, finances and biblical views on marriage and divorce. A video with an expert in the field is shown each week, followed by group discussion. There is opportunity for individual Bible study and prayer — although this is left to the comfort level of the participant.



'We advertise as being Bible-based and Christ-centred. We want people to know what they're getting — no false pretenses. Non-Christians come and they know what to expect, and we've had people come to Christ because of it'

program, and leaders receive training tapes. They also have access to an online leadership forum where they can share ideas, concerns and advice.

According to Mr. Grissom, the program fills a hole that previously existed in healing ministries — a need he recognized when he had trouble finding the right kind of help during his own divorce. "I got good help from my church but, as good and well-meaning as it was, it wasn't ideal. Most people don't understand what would help the most."

He understood that those who can best help are those who have been there themselves. His frustration with the lack of this kind of support left him wondering what else could be done. "Well, Lord," he said, recalling how the whole thing started, "why doesn't somebody do

Above all, the course focuses on the Big Three — forgiveness, reconciliation and growing closer to God.

The main goal of the program is healthy healing. "There are all sorts of ways to attempt the healing process," Mr. Grissom explained. "The most typical is medicating the pain, or 'Novocain for the heart.' It numbs the pain but doesn't solve the underlying problem." Common attempts to mask the pain include premature relationships, alcohol, drugs, food or being immersed in work. "It's anything that takes your eyes off of the healing process," said Mr. Grissom. "It's our job to point them toward a healthy emotional and spiritual path for healing."

The message of healing through Christ is central to the program's focus — although leaders are careful not to

alienate non-churchgoers who are the majority of participants. Because of this, the program is a useful ministry and outreach tool, enabling congregations to demonstrate Christ's redemptive and healing love to the community.

According to Mr. Grissom, 85 to 90 per cent of people who attend the program come from outside the host church. Half of those, he said, have little or no spiritual background. Why is there such a draw for non-Christians to attend a Christian support and recovery program? Mr. Grissom thinks the pain of a divorce is a wake-up call to search for what is truly missing in a person's life — the love and redemption of Christ. "In our culture, it takes that much pain to get people to realize their spiritual needs. We're so anaesthetized, we sort of have to reach the end of ourselves," he said. "Typically, I see churches a little surprised at how deeply it reaches the community."

A way to reach out

After years of having hurting, divorced people show up on the church doorstep for help, Rev. Dr. Stanley Cox, minister at Paris Church, had a good idea of the impact DivorceCare would have on the community. His background in pastoral care and education in psychiatry and family systems increased his awareness of the problems that divorce causes in society. "I had a hunch that it was a need that was longing to be addressed," he said.

Dr. Cox said a number of participants have told him of the positive impact the program has had on their lives and how it has given them a new understanding of the Christian faith. Not only do people have an opportunity to meet others with the same issues, but the program enables them to relate the Christian faith to their struggles. Dr. Cox said the Psalms of lament — popular passages used for study and reflection during the program — were new and even shocking to some. Many thought questioning God and feeling strong doubt and anger toward God were wrong. "But that's what faith is about," said Dr. Cox. "Being able to express that to God in prayer."

Of all the comments he has heard, Dr. Cox said three things are mentioned most frequently. "First, is the sense that they're not alone. Second, they find the

Bible and the Christian faith helpful, not condemning. Third, they discover that a relationship with God is a personal one that they hadn't thought possible."

Friendship and understanding

Cam Allen of St. George, Ont., attended his first DivorceCare meeting, led by Ms. Anderson, in Jan. 2003 after being separated for eight months. He enjoyed the group so much he attended another group, held at Knox Church in Ayr, Ont., after he finished the first. Although not a church member, the fact that the sessions were biblically based didn't offend him, and he has recently started to attend church again.

Recently divorced, Mr. Allen originally saw the program advertised on a poster and thought the group environment would be helpful. "It comforts you because you soon find out there are a lot of people there who understand what you're going through. Friends can sympathize and be helpful, but it's hard for them to understand unless they've been through it," he said.

By listening to the stories of others, Mr. Allen gained a deeper appreciation for his own situation. "I began to feel, from the revelations of people there, that even though I've gone through a divorce, I'm still pretty lucky in my life. I wound up with a lot more empathy and tolerance. There were people there who went through things I never did. It helped not only in healing from the divorce, but in growing as well."

Choosing to divorce after 24 years of marriage, Marianne Verduyn has been through Ms. Anderson's group twice. Her attendance was actually spurred on by the ending of a post-divorce relationship — where she became the one who was left behind. She said the sessions helped her name some of the things she was feeling and taught her how to get through them. "When you go through a depression, you recognize the emotions but you don't realize you're in a depression. This course helps you recognize the signs, and you realize you're not alone."

Ms. Verduyn appreciated the camaraderie at the sessions, even though the group atmosphere worried her at first. "It was like going into a lion's den for me," she admitted, but she formed good rela-

tionships over the 13 weeks. "It's a wonderful program. I thank the church for bringing it to Paris. It's been great for a lot of people."

Answering the call

Shirley Rushton is one of the people responsible for bringing DivorceCare to Brant Community Church in Brantford, Ont. She led the group Ms. Anderson originally attended. She is one of a number of Christian counsellors at Brant, where their mission focuses on helping people who are hurting. Thanks to this role, she recognized the need for a divorce support program. Today, the program runs twice a year, every year, and is

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now being offered for the seventh time. The sessions are filled to a limit of 12 people every time, and there is a waiting list to get in.

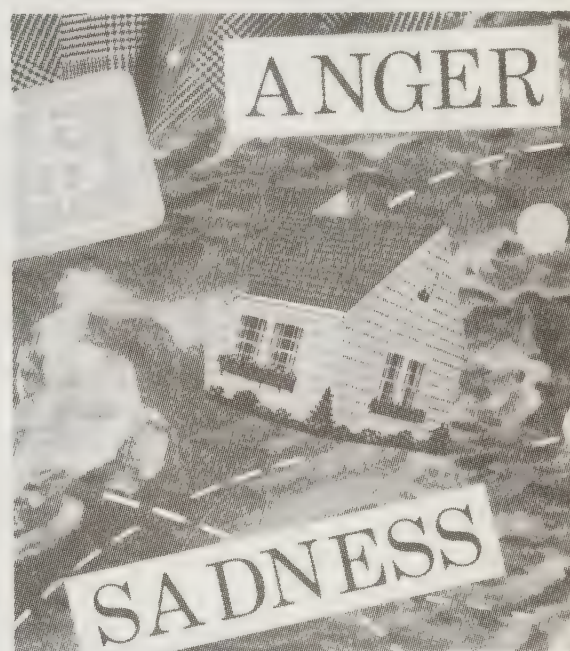
Ms. Rushton said the program helps the church fulfill its mandate of bringing people to Christ. "We get a lot of people from outside the church," she said. "We advertise as being Bible-based and Christ-centred. We want people to know what they're getting — no false pretenses. Non-Christians come and they know what to expect, and we've had people come to Christ because of it."

Although Ms. Rushton has stepped down from leading DivorceCare to start another support program on grief, she has fond memories of her time involved with the program. "We consider it a privilege that people bring us into their

lives," she said. "It's not easy for people to go. The first night is terrifying, but it's worthwhile. Every single participant has stated it was useful to them. It really is an excellent program."

Acknowledging the problem

Despite the program's success, one obvious concern is that some think the church is facilitating or condoning divorce. Mr. Grissom said that is not the case. He said whether someone is separated or divorced, forgiveness and reconciliation are paramount. "Even if a couple is divorced, if they're not remarried, restoration of the family is promoted. In cases where this isn't possible, reconciliation is



encouraged to an appropriate point, especially if there are kids involved."

The church, he added, can no longer ignore divorce and must develop an effective ministry that addresses the problem and the issues that surround it. "Churches have been deluged with people looking for help — within the church and in the surrounding community — and they're hungry for a solution."

Through DivorceCare and similar ministries, Mr. Grissom said he is simply doing what the Lord has enabled him to do. "Second Corinthians 1:3-4 speaks of comforting others with the comfort we ourselves have received from the Lord. You develop sensitivity to the needs and hurts of others who are going through the same thing, and the Lord can leverage that into a ministry opportunity." ■

Presbyterians help Pinawa Christian Fellowship celebrate 40 years

A multi-denominational congregation sees diversity in simplicity

by Hilda Young

When a group of ex-Westerners working at Atomic Energy of Canada's labs in Chalk River, Ont., in 1963 were offered a chance to return home, they "jumped at the opportunity." So recalls Dr. Jock Guthrie, a Presbyterian elder and one of those Westerners. They happily accepted transfers to the new Whiteshell Division and the (at that time, unnamed) bedroom community of Pinawa, Man., created for them by Atomic Energy.

The Pinawa pioneers reasoned that, since they would be working together and living together, they should also worship together, says Dr. Guthrie. With significant input from Rev. Bob Plant, minister of the community church in Deep River, Ont., they decided to form a multi-denominational congregation.

The first recognized worship service of the Pinawa Christian Fellowship took place Nov. 3, 1963, with representatives from the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian and United churches. While the Lutheran and Baptist denominations are no longer part of the fellowship, the existing denominational ties were recognized in the 40th anniversary year by visits from Rev. Mark Lewis (then Moderator of the Presbyterian Church), Norman Voth of the Manitoba Conference of the Mennonite Church,



Top: Rev. Harvie Barker, Pinawa's third minister (1973-1980) and first Presbyterian, shares memories with Gladys Guthrie, a Pinawa pioneer like her husband, Jock.



Left: Rev. Rob Murray, current minister of Pinawa Christian Fellowship in Manitoba, and the third Presbyterian to serve the congregation.

Virginia Coleman, former general secretary of the United Church, and the Anglican bishop of Keewatin, David Ashdown.

The anniversary weekend of Nov. 1-2 showcased the diversity of the congregation by acknowledging the richness of the different traditions. Dennis Cann, a Presbyterian elder, compiled a pictorial his-

tory of the congregation. Roger Dutton, an Anglican, talked about his experience as a member of Pinawa Fellowship. Rev. Stan McKay, former moderator of the United Church, was the guest speaker.

The congregation's diversity was highlighted in Sunday's worship service led by current minister Rev. Rob Murray (a Presbyterian), which combined Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church traditions. Communion was served by Mr. Murray

and representatives from the three denominations. A sense of "all one family" was also felt when Mr. Murray baptized twins — whose parents he had married — into the Anglican tradition. The Anglican bishop of Keewatin had confirmed the father in Pinawa Christian Fellowship.

In the early days, the members of the Pinawa Fellowship thought of themselves as a fragile experiment in ecumenism. The congregation wanted to focus on finding a minister who would accommodate the unusual situation. A church building was considered secondary. The consensus of the congregation has remained that it is

The Pinawa pioneers reasoned that since they would be working together and living together, they should also worship together

more important to pay a minister and keep up the denominational ties than to construct a building. Its credo is "The church is the people not the building."

In typical Pinawa Fellowship fashion, the anniversary celebration was held in two school gyms. Keeping the building simple somehow helps to accent the diversity, a kind of symbol that the congregation does not fit into any particular denominational tradition.

Nevertheless, the Presbyterian tradition has been strong over the years. Four Presbyterian ministers, including Mr. Murray, have served the congregation. For many years, the Presbyterian *Book of Praise* was the hymn book of choice. Many Presbyterians sing in the choir and are members of the general committee and other church groups. The Presbyterian session still keeps contact with the Presbytery of Winnipeg, and the congregation also continues to support Flora House, a Presbyterian inner-city mission in Winnipeg.

Today, Atomic Energy of Canada is no longer a strong influence in the community, but the congregation of dedicated Christians that came together there as Pinawa Christian Fellowship continues to bear witness. **R**

Hilda Young, a former resident of Pinawa, Man., now lives in Petawawa, Ont.



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April 16: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. & April 17: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Ancient Voices: Exploring Old Testament Literature and Faith

Prof. Pat Dutcher-Walls

ELECTIVES (choose one)

March 19: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. & March 20: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Reformed Worship | The Rev. Emily Rodgers

April 15: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. & April 16: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Caring for God's People | Prof. Charles Fensham

For more information contact: Ann Campbell 204-783-1133

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BASIC COURSE

April 2: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. & April 3: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Reading the Bible | Prof. Dorcas Gordon

ELECTIVE

April 23: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. & April 24: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Reformed Faith & Spirituality | Dr. Nick Athanasiadis

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May 22, Aug 7 & 21/04 – 12 Days
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Assembly Council meeting includes two presentations

by Tom Dickey

The meeting of Assembly Council held Nov. 23-25 at Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch, Ont., had the usual amount of planning and house-keeping, largely in preparation for this year's General Assembly, but also included two informative presentations on work that is vital to the church.

Protecting the vulnerable

Dorothy Henderson, associate secretary, Education for Discipleship, brought the council up to date on the progress of the document *Faithful Response: The Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Care of Children, Youth and Vulner-*

generally be put into action at the congregational level.

Reconciling with the victims

The following day, Rev. Gordon Haynes, associate secretary for Canada Ministries, and committee member Lou Ford spoke to the council work in another important area: the Task Force on Healing and Reconciliation regarding aboriginal people hurt by the residential school system. Mr. Haynes took care to point out that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem. The aboriginal people are a diverse group, made up of many nations. The vision of the task force is: "Healing

'All people, particularly children, youth and vulnerable adults, who participate in the programs and use the facilities of our denomination will be cared for with Christian compassion and will be safe'

able Adults in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The draft version of *Faithful Response* was distributed to presbyteries and congregations for comment. They were to have responded by the end of January. Their suggestions will be considered and incorporated into a final draft, which will be presented to General Assembly in June. Ms. Henderson expects the document to be approved by the assembly and put into effect, allowing for a period of grace for congregations to get on board. As to who will implement the policy and where, Ms. Henderson admits that area is a "little fuzzy." However, she describes the policy as self-implementing and expects it will

and reconciliation can be achieved through relationships based on trust, awareness and understanding between people of the church and aboriginal people, resulting in lasting partnerships through concrete projects with measurable results." The task force hopes congregations will develop partnerships with aboriginal communities, working together on projects such as Habitat for Humanity, for example, to begin the process.

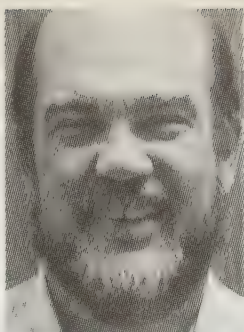
The most important part of the task force's work is education, according to Mr. Haynes. People need to have an awareness of the hurt and damage caused by the residential school system and of the need for healing and reconciliation.

Of prime importance will be a series of consultations the task force will hold across the country, beginning in Winnipeg this month. The meetings will involve several groups — First Nations people, members of the church, congregations already involved in the reconciliation process, other denominations, and corporations and foundations. The task force intends to complete the consultations this spring and bring a report to the Assembly Council at the end of March. From there, it is hoped fundraising for various projects can begin in January 2005. If all goes according to plan, many of these projects will be launched at the 2005 General Assembly in Edmonton.

At the end of the presentation, Assembly Council approved a motion affirming the direction of the task force and granting council executive the power to issue with matters pertaining to the task force.

Other business

In other business at the meeting, Assembly Council passed a motion empowering the council's convener and the principal clerk, as officers of the court,



'There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem'

Rev. Gordon Haynes

and the Trustee Board to accept a new form of release proposed by the federal government, provided appropriate wording can be added to the settlement agreement. That wording would (a) restrict third-party claims against the church by the government relating to language and culture and (b) add a criterion that will recognize the church's acceptance of a partial release in the good faith negotiation when determining possible contributions to language and culture damages, if recognized by the courts.

In response to Overture 16 presented at last year's General Assembly, a recommendation was passed: "That all persons holding executive positions in The Presbyterian Church in Canada are encour-

aged to take courses in Canadian Presbyterian polity and history, if they have not already taken such courses, or at the first performance review, demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of Canadian Presbyterian polity and history." And "That the Assembly Council review and revise job descriptions of executive positions to require, at the time of commencing an appointment or at the first performance review, a demonstrated knowledge of Canadian Presbyterian polity and history by those who may be in a position to influence the polity and theology of the church."

In response to Overture 27 (2003), the Pension and Benefits Board, together with Ministry and Church Vocations, is developing a handbook on maternity/parental leave for presentation to the Assembly Council in March.

The FLAMES Initiative will end at the 2005 General Assembly. The Long Range Planning Committee continues to look for ways to find God's opportunities for the church after FLAMES. Recommendations will be presented to the next General Assembly. **R**

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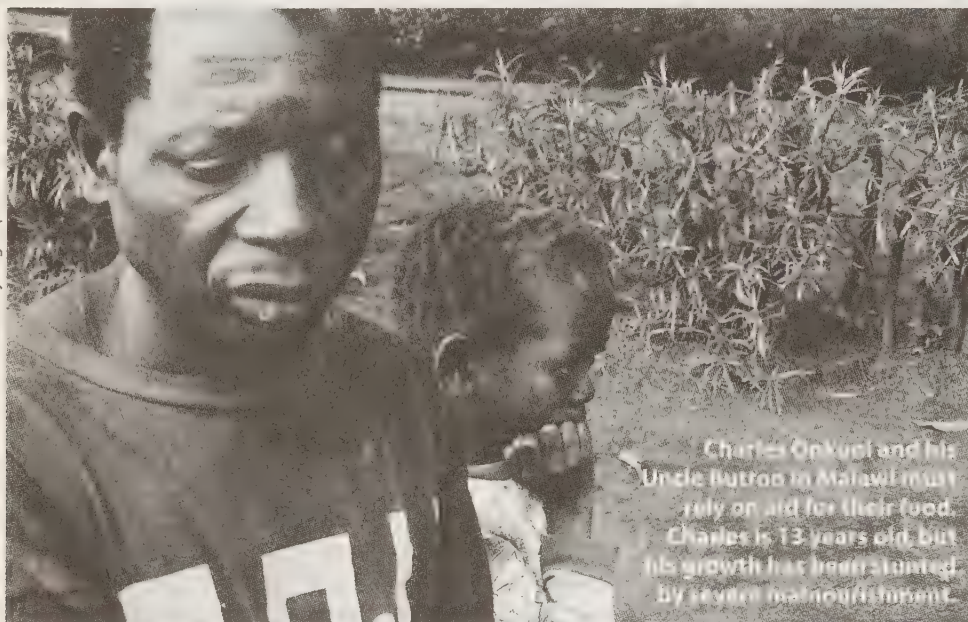
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Malawi churches pray for the right president — and for rain

Photo by Hege Opseth NCA/ACT International



Charles Onkvet and his Uncle Blutton in Malawi must rely on aid for their food. Charles is 13 years old, but his growth has been stunted by severe malnourishment.

BLANTYRE, MALAWI — Clergy from various denominations in Malawi have begun the new year with national prayers for the election of a suitable president later this year and for rain. It has been a drought-ridden period with hunger rife in the poor central African nation.

The prayers, organized by the human rights group Churches Development Coordinating Committee, were held when the new year arrived and marked preparations for the scheduled May 18 national elections for a president and a Parliament. The elections will be the third in succession since the central African country adopted a multi-party system of government in 1994. That poll saw current President Bakili Muluzi wresting power from the despotic Dr. Kamuzu Banda, the country's founding president who died in 1997.

Church leaders who converged at Mjamba Freedom Park in the commercial hub of Blantyre also prayed for good rains following mass hunger inflicted on the country in recent years. They asked God to rid the nation of escalating political violence, rampant official corruption, nepotism, swelling unemployment and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Rev. Daniel Gunya, general secretary for the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, the country's second largest denomination, said Malawi needed to repent and seek forgiveness from God to cleanse the nation of its miseries. "As a nation we have to admit our sins, confess and ask the Almighty to rescue us from the recurrent food crisis, loss of jobs and mismanaged resources — and, of course, guide us with wisdom to choose a good leader in the forthcoming elections."

Over 65 per cent of Malawi's population of 12 million lives below the poverty line of \$1 US a day. The United Nations Development Program has placed Malawi as one of the 10 poorest countries in the world.

Representatives from the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist and Zambezi Evangelical churches took part in the prayers, also attended by leaders of the country's major opposition parties. Many church leaders accuse the current government of gross mismanagement, which has left the country impoverished. Some government leaders have criticized church leaders for engaging in politics ahead of the elections. *ENI*

HIV-positive children win battle for admission to Kenyan schools

NAIROBI — Seventy-two children with HIV/AIDS from Nyumbani, a Roman Catholic orphanage for HIV-positive children on the outskirts of Nairobi, have won the right to be admitted to Kenyan public schools. On January 9, Kenya's High Court ordered the Ministry of Education and the Nairobi city council to place the children in public schools in the city. The children had been refused admittance to primary schools in the Kenyan capital.

'This is a resounding victory for life, liberty and justice over prejudice, stigma and fear'

Ababu Namwamba

"This is a resounding victory for life, liberty and justice over prejudice, stigma and fear," Ababu Namwamba, a lawyer for the orphanage, said of the court ruling. Five Nairobi primary schools had refused to admit the children when schools opened on January 5, said the founder of the orphanage, Rev. Angelo D'Agostino, a Roman Catholic priest from Providence, R.I. "Once they find the child is from Nyumbani, they find some sort of excuse."

The schools' refusal to admit the children had been criticized by church leaders who said that it challenged the government's policy of free compulsory primary education.

"This is the first case we have heard of, but refusing these children admission is not only ungodly and evil, but also underlines the misconceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS," said Rev. Isaac Wanyoike of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

"This issue raises questions when we are fighting to end all forms of discrimination on people with HIV/AIDS," said Rev. William Wako, provincial secretary of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

Lawyers are seeking to have the ruling extended to cover all children with HIV/AIDS in Kenya and not only those from the Nyumbani orphanage. The government was instructed to respond within three weeks. *ENI*

French church leader censures call for ban on religious symbols at school

GENEVA — A French Protestant leader has criticized President Jacques Chirac's call for a law to ban Islamic headscarves and other "conspicuous" religious symbols from schools run by public authorities, warning that such a law may be seen as "anti-Islamic." Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, president of the Protestant Federation of France, said a ban would be difficult to enforce and could strengthen the hand of Islamic extremists. President Chirac's announcement followed months of fierce debate about how avowedly secular France should deal with female Muslim students who wear an Islamic veil or headscarf at school.

"The Islamic veil — whatever name we give it — the kippa and a cross that is of plainly excessive dimensions: these have no place in the precincts of state schools," President Chirac said. "State schools will remain secular. For that a law is necessary."

But Mr. de Clermont said the measure could be seen in France's estimated five-million Muslim population as an anti-Islamic position and could help extremists gain ground.

"Everyone knows that people no longer wear huge crosses, so it's a kind of hypocrisy to say that, of course, we are not against Jews or Muslims but against

all 'conspicuous' signs," Mr. de Clermont said. "We all know that it is not possible to define what a religious sign is. For example, if a Muslim comes in green clothing [a colour traditionally associated with Islam], is that a religious sign?"

But Mr. de Clermont said he approved of Mr. Chirac's statement that "all religions have their place" in France and about the need to promote equality and integration of minority groups while taking action to combat xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism. "This is the principal action to take," said Mr. de Clermont. "We have to fight the cause of all those problems and not the effects." *ENI*

Interfaith dialogue a top priority, says World Council of Churches leader

GENEVA — Interfaith dialogue will be a top priority for the World Council of Churches during the tenure of Rev. Sam Kobia. On Jan. 1, Mr. Kobia, an ordained minister in the Methodist Church in

Kenya, became the first African to head the WCC as General Secretary. He succeeds Dr. Konrad Raiser, of the Evangelical Church in Germany, who served as general secretary for 11 years before retiring at the end of 2003.

On his new role. "I think there is no other organization that has that mandate, or even capacity to do it, so I would really like to work towards a global symposium on religious dialogue, inter-religious dialogue and inter-religious cooperation," said Mr. Kobia. "Religion is now playing a very important role in the search for identity for many people."

The new world council leader cited religious fundamentalism as a peril that could be used as a source of conflict and violence.

"Religious fundamentalism, whether it is in Islam or Christianity or Buddhism or among Hindus, as we have seen in India, can be very dangerous," said Mr. Kobia. "One of the ways that we could deal with the issue is by having a dialogue of faiths, and I am committed to really working on this."

ENI



'I feel strongly that the world council is the best place to provide a platform for global dialogue of different faiths'

Rev. Sam Kobia

Kenya, became the first African to head the WCC as General Secretary. He succeeds Dr. Konrad Raiser, of the Evangelical Church in Germany, who served as general secretary for 11 years before retiring at the end of 2003.

"I feel strongly that the world council is the best place to provide a platform for global dialogue of different faiths," Mr. Kobia told *Ecumenical News International* in his first interview since taking

Publishers Weekly selects best religious books of 2003

The editors of *Publishers Weekly* have chosen the following titles as the best religious books published last year:

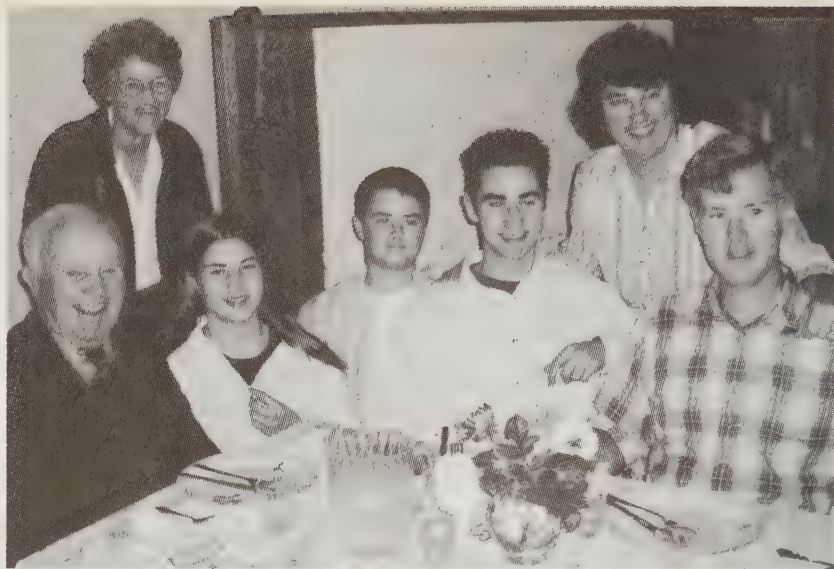
1. *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch* by Sue Fishkoff (Schocken)
2. *Living a Year of Kaddish* by Ari L. Goldman (Schocken)
3. *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* by George M. Marshall (Yale University Press)
4. *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* by Elaine Pagels (Random House)
5. *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* by Stephen Prothero (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)
6. *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* by Peter Steinfels (Simon & Schuster)
7. *Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies and the Truth About Reality* by Brad Warner (Wisdom)
8. *Rumours of Another World: What on Earth Are We Missing?* by Philip Yancey (Zondervan)

Only Pagels' *Beyond Belief* made it onto bestseller lists. The bestseller in religion was Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life*, with more than eight million copies sold since its release a year ago.

Christian Century

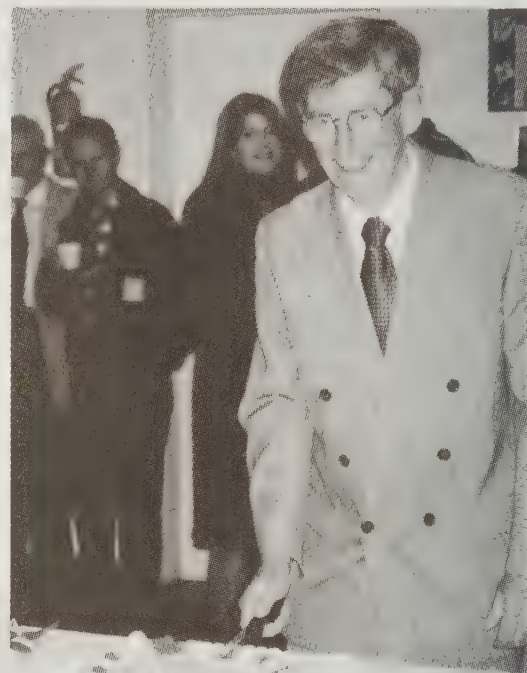
people & places

The 90th birthday of Rev. Gilbert Smith, minister emeritus of Trinity, Victoria, was celebrated at the congregation's Thanksgiving dinner. Joining him were: his wife, Barbara; grandchildren, Sarah, Brian and Stephen; daughter-in-law, Ethelwyn; and son, David.



▲ Iris Offiong (left) was visited by Loreta Bendicion (centre) and June Ferguson when she sold Bridgehead tea and coffee and Rainforest Crunch at MacNab Street Church, Hamilton, Ont., recently

Willard Allan was honoured for 35 years as choir director of First, Thunder Bay, Ont. During the worship service, a music stand was dedicated in his name and placed in the sanctuary.



◀ The congregation of Knox, Listowel, Ont., honoured its senior members at a 90-plus birthday party. Seated are: (L-R) Bert Hastings, Helen Mitchell, Louise Davidson and Jessie Hamilton. Behind them are Lawson Doig (left) and Jack Gee. Eight other members were unable to attend.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Unfortunately, we cannot return any photographs. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

Performers at a Celebration fundraising concert for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, held at Geneva Church, Chesley, Ont., included: (L-R) Steve Kennedy, John Victor, Andrew Affleck, Rev. Ken Oakes, Craig Bignell and Dan Hynek.



The congregations of Ballyduff and Nestleton, Ont., joined together for a surprise luncheon in honour of their minister, Rev. William Fairley, on the occasion of his 85th birthday. With him are church members of the Goldegrove Group Chapter of the Red Hat Society, who presented him with a red hat and tartan necktie.



Moses delivers the Ten Commandments to the Israelites at a vacation Bible school run jointly by St. David's, Vankoughnet, and Knox, Bracebridge, Ont. The Israelites also contributed \$130 for famine relief in Malawi.



Rev. Lyle and Margaret Sams were honoured at a celebration held at Almonte Church, Almonte, Ont., recognizing the 50th anniversary of Lyle's ordination.



The pastoral care team of West Vancouver Church held a coffee break on National Alzheimer Society Fundraising Coffee Break Day, raising \$2,010 for the society's work. Jean Lawrence (left), a member of West Vancouver's pastoral care team, previously hosted a number of Alzheimer coffee breaks at her home in memory of a next door neighbour who died from the disease. Last year, she decided to expand the project by holding the coffee break in the church hall. Pictured with her are Sharon Moxon (winner of a T-shirt door prize) and Alix Santoro.

Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord was the theme for a special study and craft project held by the church school of Alberton Church, Alberton, Ont.



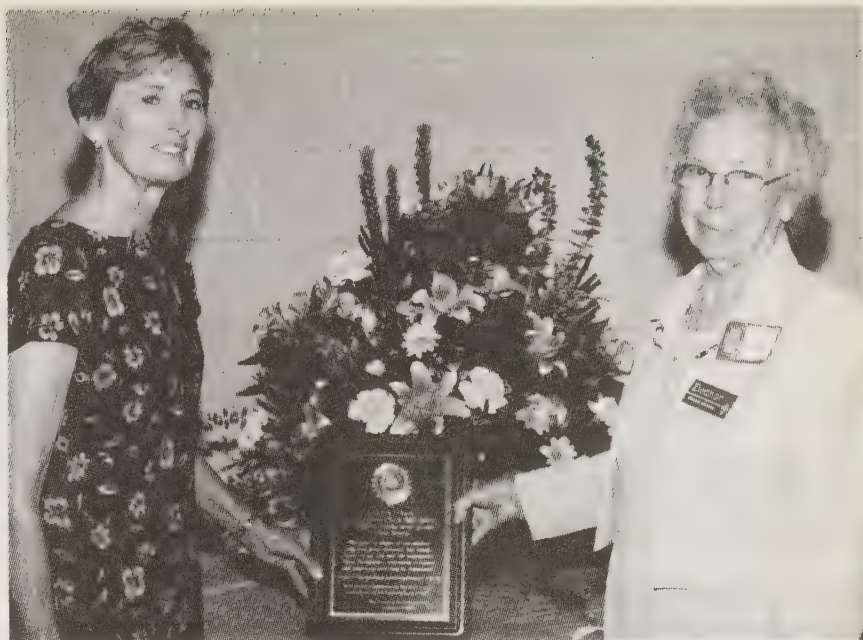
▲ Catherine Walker, pictured with clerk of session Don McNabb, was presented with a plaque for her 52 years as organist and music director of Jubilee, Stayner, Ont.

A new organ was dedicated at Knox, Bobcaygeon, Ont., after the previous one was damaged during a lightning storm. Organist and choir director ▼ Pat Henderson is joined at the new organ by Rev. Doug Scott, a former minister of the congregation.



◀ Three generations of the Magee family — Mackenzie, her grandmother, Isobel Magee, and her mother, Helen Kozun-Young — search for material in the church library to display during 50th anniversary celebrations being held this year for St. Giles, St. Catherines, Ont.

A special reception was held after morning worship at St. Andrew's, Windsor, Ont., in honour of the more than 75 years of service of the Women's Guild, which disbanded last year. Jean Douglas Willms (left), president of the Evening Guild, presented a plaque recognizing the many outstanding contributions of the Women's Guild to its former president, Eleanor Keith.



A Certificate of Recognition was presented to Howie Dearlove (left) by the WMS of Knox, Crescent, Kensington and First, Montreal, in appreciation for his contribution and support of the WMS and his work for the congregation as a whole. Making the presentation was Rev. Dr. Kenneth MacLeod.



The congregation of Westminster, Paisley, Ont., presented Helen Cumming with a gold bracelet and a certificate in gratitude for her 25 years as organist. Congratulating her are choir member Alva Irving and Rev. John Baker.



Anitha Mahendiran, director of the Institute for Development Education in Chennai, India, spoke about the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development with the institute at a mission evening held at Knox, Guelph, Ont. With her is Wilma Welsh, who introduced her.

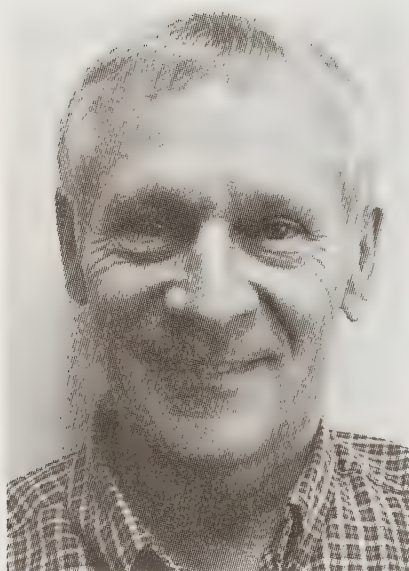
The congregation of St. Andrew's Memorial, Port Credit, Ont., held a day of recognition for retiring clerk of session Bob English, shown with his wife, Marilyn, for his 15 years of dedicated service.



Three nominated for moderator of the 130th General Assembly

On Sunday, June 6, 2004, the 130th General Assembly will open in Oshawa, Ont., and elect a new moderator. The official nominee or moderator-designate will come from a field of three candidates. Each candidate has been nominated by at least two presbyteries. Voting to choose the moderator-designate takes place prior to assembly by all members of presbyteries across the country. The result should be known April 1, 2004.

by Tom Dickey



Richard Fee

Rev. Richard Fee sees The Presbyterian Church in Canada as a denomination beloved by its members, sincerely appreciated by other churches and faith bodies in Canada, and deeply respected by partner churches and ecumenical organizations around the world. His view comes from the unique perspective of being executive director of Presbyterian World Service and Development for the past 11 years. He is also heavily involved in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (vice-chairperson), KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, and Action by Churches Together. In his role with the foodgrains bank, he has monitored food shipments to Central America, Albania, Kosovo, North Korea and Africa. His most recent humanitarian assessment mission was to Iraq in July 2003. He also serves on the World Council of Churches body uniting development and relief agencies.

A native of Killam, Alberta (where he maintains strong ties), Mr. Fee attended the University of Alberta in Edmonton, St. Patrick's College and Carleton University in Ottawa, Knox College in Toronto and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. His education has doubtless come in handy in his work — he has degrees in sociology, comparative world religions and theology.

After graduating from Knox College in 1976, Mr. Fee was appointed by the Board of World Mission to work with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Over the next 16 years, he served the Nigerian church in a number of ways, from rural parish minister to deputy clerk of the General Assembly. His connection to Nigeria remains highly visible in Canada — he has an adopted Nigerian son, Nkwuda, a daughter-in-law, Kelechi, and a granddaughter, Kendra Ifeoma.

Mr. Fee values the resilient and relevant structure of a Presbyterian form of church government. Yet he also cautions that, behind the structure, there are vital issues with which the church must wrestle. "Commissioners should come to

assemblies with all their heart, mind and strength,” Mr. Fee stresses. “It is through respectful and prayerful exchange that the will of God can be discerned for our denomination today.” As moderator, he would “watch, listen and pray” to ensure commissioners feel free to speak openly.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Presbyterian Church, in Mr. Fee’s mind, is to discover and encourage ways of equipping older members to share their spirituality and faith with their children and grandchildren. In this way, he believes, the sharing would become a two-way street. The church’s message will speak to the young and to the old, to those with emerging faith and to those with mature faith. “The church must be the welcoming, discerning and loving presence of Christ right where people are living their lives — 24/7/365,” he says.

Mr. Fee understands the importance of preaching in areas of human development and disaster relief, and the illumination, strength and perspective it can provide. Proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in the humanitarian sphere is a challenge he enjoys. Speaking the gospel in different situations is a task he expects a moderator to assume.

Coming from a small village in Alberta, having worked in Africa for 16 years and with experience accumulated from many of the world’s disaster situations and struggling communities, Richard Fee believes he would bring a distinct personal touch to the role of moderator.

Harry McWilliams

The ministry of Word and Sacraments was not Rev. Harry McWilliams’s first profession. Born in Coleraine, County Derry, Northern Ireland, he immigrated with his family to Hamilton, Ont., at the age of 13. After graduating from high school, he became an electrician and worked in the electrical construction industry for 17 years. Perhaps his time in the blue or, rather, non-clerical collar world later contributed to his taking courses in leadership and management, preaching, conflict management, addiction studies and interim ministry.

Before entering the ministry, Mr. McWilliams was active in the church as a leader in the Presbyterian Young People’s Society, Boys Brigade, church school, board of managers, Presbyterian Men and as an elder. On graduating from Knox College, Toronto, with an M.Div. in 1975, he received a travelling scholarship (and others) and spent two years at the religious studies department of McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., where he had earlier received a BA in political science and sociology. He has been a pastor in Kingston, Toronto and Hamilton and, for the past 20 years, he has served as senior minister of Knox, Oakville, Ont., a congregation of more than 600 members. He is the author of many articles and study papers produced for the church at large. Also active in his community, Mr. McWilliams is currently a member of the Hospital Chaplaincy Advisory Committee, the Ian Anderson House for palliative care and the hospital emergency response team.

If elected, Mr. McWilliams would bring to the role his experience in moderating at the presbytery and synod levels, and a respect for the court that places value on decorum, courtesy and propriety. He would also bring another valuable asset for overseeing a General Assembly — a keen sense of humour.

Mr. McWilliams believes church polity should be summed up by the acronym LAW: Love At Work. To help put that love to work, he would call on his passionate love for Christ and his church, his communication skills and his desire to share his vision of a missionary and ministering church. In such a church, he says, “we implement the New Testament teaching that all Christians are called to ministry with Christ, and we celebrate the diversity of gifts and ministries with thanksgiving and joy.”



The major issue facing the Presbyterian Church and the church as a whole, says Mr. McWilliams, is to have a vision for and a commitment to being a missionary and ministering church for Christ in our world. He points to a question posed by Tom Bandy (of church consultants Easum, Bandy and Associates) as the nub of what it means to be a Christian and a church: "Am I in the mission field with Jesus?" We must wrestle in the Spirit to learn how to fulfill our commission effectively in making and nurturing disciples for Christ.

Harry McWilliams has been married to Barbara Ann Dyson for 42 years. They have two children, Karen and Paul, and two grandchildren, Will and Alexa.



Marjorie Ross


Marjorie Ross believes God's plan for our country and the world includes The Presbyterian Church in Canada. "God is calling us to set aside our preoccupation with our institution and its problems," she says, "and be about the tasks of nurturing our people and empowering them to reach out in Christ's name to a world in turmoil."

Ms. Ross speaks from experience similar to that of another nominee — Richard Fee. After graduating from the University of Western Ontario, London, with an MA in 1961, she, too, was a missionary in Nigeria (with her late husband, Murray Ross, from 1962-1969). She, too, has extensive ecumenical experience, having worked as a staff person with the Canadian Council of Churches and The Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility. More recently (2000-2001), she convened the process that integrated the work of 12 ecumenical coalitions into KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. In 1991, she was presented with an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Knox College in recognition of her ecumenical contributions. And, in arguably the biggest similarity to Mr. Fee, she was interim director of Presbyterian World Service and Development from 1990 until Mr. Fee was named executive director in 1992. Ms. Ross was then appointed associate secretary for International Ministries, a position she served for 11 years until her retirement last summer.

When Ms. Ross talks about the work of the church, she talks about mission. She speaks enthusiastically about the many "lively, interested, dedicated Presbyterians of all ages" she has met. Some are involved in outreach to those on the fringes of our society. Some are proclaiming Christ's message in word and action on short overseas mission trips. All are committed to our church and are more than ready to try new ways of doing things, she says. For them, particularly for the young people, the sole purpose of structures and policies is to support ministry and mission.

Ms. Ross considers it a special blessing to come to know the people who represent the church with its mission partners around the world, as well as those who reach out to the poor and lonely here in Canada. "With God's help, our church has played — and continues to play — an important role," she says. "Although our numbers and budget have never been large, we make our contribution through the grace-filled lives and witness of individual men and women. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, they were, and are, the face of Christ to those they meet."

As moderator, Marjorie Ross would remind the church that, time and again in Scripture, a tiny group is called to attempt great things in God's name. "By relying on God's leading, and in God's strength, a few men and women confound the wisdom of the world," she says. "God is calling us. I believe many in our church hear that call and are ready to respond."

Ms. Ross has three children: (Rev.) Geoffrey, Ijeoma and Jamie, and eight grandchildren. 

pastoral epistles from peter plymley II

Dear Editor:

I had rather hoped Joyless John McWhirter's plan to establish The Society Of Those Who Are Dedicated To Keep On Doing What We Have Always Been Doing would fade in the grey light and flu-ridden *doleurs* of what passes for a normal Canadian winter, but my hope was unavailing. Nor had I spent enough time, as he had asked, in coming up with a less awkward banner under which he could fly his proposal.

So, with not a little trepidation, I set out to answer his summons to meet with a few chosen specimens from our presbytery. I could not follow John down many of the byways of his eccentric and notoriously contrarian mind, but I had no wish to see him ridiculed.

He had, surprisingly, chosen a rather decent restaurant and booked a room therein. Perhaps his experiment with poutine at our last encounter had enlightened him — or so I, looking for any silver lining in this cloud, liked to think.

There was wisdom in his selective list of invitations. I had long since learned that it was impossible to assemble a broad swath of presbyters for anything other than a stated meeting, and not always then. Though with this narrow swath he was risking a future charge of cliquishness, I knew that any other approach would garner more “regrets” than people present — some even from those in attendance. Of course, the by now common knowledge of his accidental/inadvertent lottery win might have swelled the ranks, but such tumescence would be more painful than productive.

The Rev. J. Paddyngton Bayer was there, beaming at all and sundry, though I knew the beams were draining the wattage remaining to him. His attempt to make St. George-North Park Presbyterian a niche market in Celtic consciousness had encountered some speed bumps. A few families — Korean, Hungarian, Ghanaian, Guyanese and one Dutch fugitive from the Christian Reformed Church — had drifted into worship there, only to be bewildered by the Celtic emphasis. Be-

fore long they had departed for less ethnocentric (pseudo or not) sheepfolds, and their departure had not gone unnoticed.

The Rev. Fiona Fitzhenry-Whiteside had been growing remarkably and perhaps terminally tired of trying to think up new reasons for her congregation to be “excited” or “challenged” about something and was ready to pack it all in for a career in teaching English as a second language anywhere in the world that would hire her. At the same time, she felt a change of scene would benefit her social life. (She had found that her vocation made dating awkward.) Though she had

‘What is the perpetual temptation of the institutional church and all who sail in her? We spend all our time studying the rigging and ignoring the sea’

never, despite her mother's opinion on the subject, thought a husband was the next best thing to being Moderator of the General Assembly, she nevertheless liked to think of herself as more than a curiosity, at least to anyone but the lethally pious.

The remainder included The Rev. Millicent (MilliMac) MacPherson, J.P.'s too capable (for him) assistant; The Rev. Aubrey Swinburne, the erstwhile Protestant (barely) Cardinal Newman of the suburbs but a computer specialist *and* a reader; and, besides myself, ruling elders Prudence (Pru) Pettibone of St. Peter's and St. Paul's-by-the-PetroCan (Fiona's bailiwick), Miriam Duff and a few others whose names I will omit because I'm running out of space.

“John, it's hopeless!” — or words to that effect — formed the general consensus when he finished holding forth on his thesis.

“You mean my idea or the way I've explained it?”

“Both!” “You've got it!” “I think I'll have another coffee” were among the replies I can remember.

“Look,” his voice took on a serious, soft persistence, “what is the perpetual

temptation of the institutional church and all who sail in her?” He didn't wait for an answer. “We spend all our time studying the rigging and ignoring the sea. Let me mix you another borrowed metaphor: we ‘have this treasure in earthen vessels.’” (John always quoted from the Authorized Version). “Everybody has an opinion on the design and construction of the container, the box. The treasure is a gift, a mystery that we don't, can't, fully understand — though we like to pretend we do, maybe with a tiny bit here or there left out.

“Some think the design was perfected in 1950, or 1590, or 550 and should not

be tampered with. Others want a box approved by marketing mavens, designed to leap off the shelf at the uncertain shopper. Some think we should change the box frequently, like socks, to keep it fresh. Still others imagine we can do without the box or the ship and walk on water without structure, carry what can't be carried without the always flawed intervention of mere flesh and blood — an idea that renders the Incarnation pointless.”

John was beginning to run out of the energy to juggle his metaphors. His voice trailed off and his audience began to play with the sugar packets.

“I'm working on it” were his words of dismissal. With a note of relief, the gathering thanked him and left.

He looked at me and said, “Plymley, they want to know how it can be true.” I think he meant more than our little group.

February is, perhaps, a bad month for more than survival, but it is closer to spring than November.

Yours for more daylight,



Learning is fun at camp

Teens help children learn to read

by David Broughton

The telephone rings at the Laubach Literacy office in Kamloops, B.C. A mother is calling to find some help for her child who is going into Grade 2 and cannot read. The receptionist has heard this plea for help before. But, unfortunately, the local volunteer agencies do not have a mandate to help young children. They work mainly with adults who have gone through school without learning how to read at a level that will help them find a job in the technological age.

As someone who likes to see problems resolved, I began to think and pray about how to help children in the early grades with reading. The field worker for Laubach Literacy in British Columbia gave me a manual for a summer reading program operating in Newfoundland. By adapting some of its ideas along with program ideas from vacation Bible school, the concept of a summer reading camp was born.

We chose students from grades 1 through 3 to target for help. So we

needed tutors who had both the time and energy to work with children for the two-week camp. Teenagers seemed to fit this job description best. Although few attended church regularly, a number of teens had gone to Sunday school or been baptized at our church. With financial help from the Experimental Fund of the national church, the Presbyterian Women at St. Andrew's in Kamloops and fundraising, we were able to offer \$240 to the teens for their services as tutors.

(continued on page 38)



Tutors and students from the 2001 summer reading camp held at St. Andrew's Church, Kamloops, B.C.



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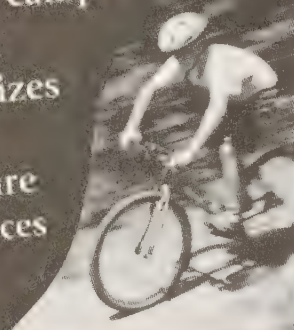
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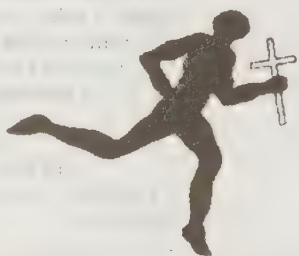
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"Each one teach one" — the motto of Laubach Literacy being carried out at the summer reading camp by Lacey Stark and her student, Sarah Hallam.

The teens have proven to be the most valuable part of the program. They have the enthusiasm and energy to work with the children. A close bond develops between the students and their tutors that adults with more teaching experience are unable to achieve.

The first camp in 1998 proved we could successfully run a reading program to help children with reading problems. We held our sixth camp last summer. Each of the 10 students works with a teen who tutors them one-on-one for an hour each morning. Other activities during the morning include singing, stories, prayer, outdoor activities, drama and a craft.

Over the past six years, I have asked myself how we can measure what has been accomplished with the reading camp. The best way is to listen to and

observe those who participate in the program. I hear moms asking to pre-register their children for next year's camp. I hear the children's enthusiasm as they attend camp each day and talk of coming again next year. I see children who are tentative about taking risks for fear of failure becoming self-confident from the successes they enjoy. I see teens return as tutors until they graduate from high school. And I have observed my own growth in patience as I let God be in charge of the camp.

We are thankful for the opportunity to serve the Lord and help children in our community through the summer reading camp.

David Broughton is a member of St. Andrew's Church in Kamloops, B.C.



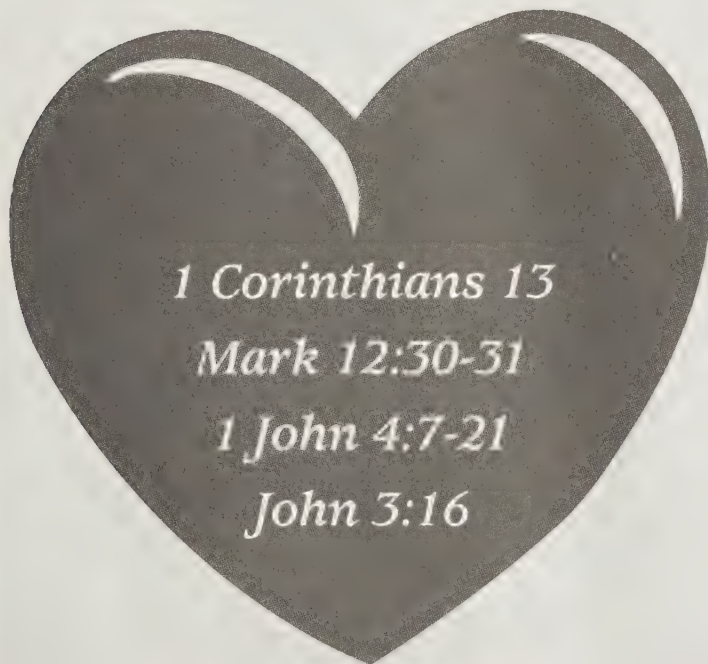
Students and tutors take a break from tutoring to hear a story.

called to wonder

Written by Erin Walton,
youth minister, First Church, Edmonton

Valentine's Day is a special day in February when you can show those you love how much they mean to you. It is also a good time to remember the love God has for us and the love God calls us to share with others.

Read the following Scripture verses about love. When you are finished, cut out the heart and ask an adult to make several copies of it. Glue the hearts inside the valentine cards you send to share God's messages of love with others!



Love prayer

Close your eyes and think of all the people who love you and whom you love. Now, think about God and the love he has for you. Remember to thank God for his love and ask God for help in showing love to others, because love comes from God.

You will find more Valentine's Day fun online at:
www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html



Hearts-filled-with-love cookies

Fill these favourites with raspberry or strawberry jam.

Cream together:

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup sugar

Sift together:

- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Mix with the shortening and sugar.

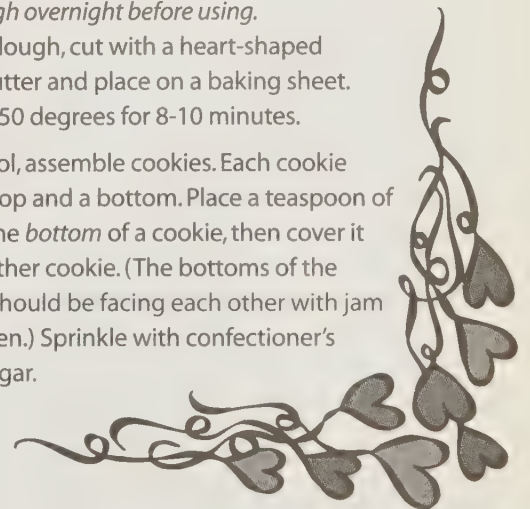
Stir in:

- 1 well-beaten egg
- 2 tablespoons condensed milk
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla

Chill dough overnight before using.

Roll out dough, cut with a heart-shaped cookie cutter and place on a baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 8-10 minutes.

When cool, assemble cookies. Each cookie needs a top and a bottom. Place a teaspoon of jelly on the *bottom* of a cookie, then cover it with another cookie. (The bottoms of the cookies should be facing each other with jam in between.) Sprinkle with confectioner's (icing) sugar.



The little presbytery that's big in history

The Presbytery of Prince Edward Island

by Tom Dickey

Mention Prince Edward Island to most Canadians and what comes to mind? The birthplace of Confederation? The home of Anne of Green Gables? Hands up all readers who said "The cradle of Presbyterian missions." (I thought so.) Nevertheless, the Island and, therefore, the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island can lay a legitimate claim to that title, at least in Canadian terms.

The first Presbyterian Women's Missionary Society was organized in 1825 by a group of women from Princetown (now Malpeque). Originally calling themselves The Presbyterian Female Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and Other Religious Purposes (ah, they don't choose names like that anymore), they were concerned about the number of "unchurched" residents on the Island's north shore. With what was to become trademark WMS determination, the group somehow found funds to supply Bibles to the isolated villagers and pay for an itinerant minister. The Princetown society is also the first WMS on record anywhere in the world — formed nine years before the first group in England.

The work of the WMS on Prince Edward Island was given a running start by one of its great boosters, the illustrious Rev. John Geddie. Inducted into the Cavendish/New London charge in 1838, he was instrumental in the formation of WMS groups in all Presbyterian churches on the Island.

John Geddie was also an early crusader for Presbyterian mission in another way. In Nov. 1845, he set sail for the New Hebrides, becoming the first Presbyterian missionary from Canada to serve on a foreign mission field. (Two other missionaries from P.E.I. who went



The Keir Memorial Museum in Malpeque, P.E.I., named in honour of pioneer Presbyterian minister Rev. Dr. John Keir and housed in the former Keir Memorial Church.

to the New Hebrides in 1857 were not as fortunate. Rev. George and Catherine Gordon from Alberton were killed by natives in 1861. George's brother, Rev. James Gordon, suffered the same fate in 1872 — while he was at work translating the story of Stephen's martyrdom into the local language.)

The Presbytery of Prince Edward Island was also once home to the denomination's first theological college: Pictou

Academy, founded in Pictou, N.S., in 1816 by the well-known Scottish Presbyterian minister Rev. Dr. Thomas McCulloch. Following Dr. McCulloch's death in 1843, Rev. Dr. John Keir, minister of the Princetown church, was appointed to replace him as professor of theology. Upon his appointment, Dr. Keir moved the college to his 20-room house in Princetown, where it remained until it was moved back to Nova Scotia in 1848.

Today, the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island could serve as a microcosm for much of the national church: predominantly rural, with many small, multi-point charges and a few urban congregations thrown in. At the moment, the presbytery is experiencing that vacant feeling, with several churches without ministers. On the positive side, several congregations are remaining vital, with membership in the hundreds. Summer-side Church recently celebrated its 150th anniversary, and the congregation of St. James is observing its 125th year in its present building.

The Presbytery of Prince Edward Island is really a constituency, with the rare opportunity to deal with issues on a provincial level. It is concerned with all matters that affect the quality of life. Last year, the mission committee contributed to food banks across the province. Camp Keir, located on the Island's south shore (behind the white-shingled church at Canoe Cove), serves Presbyterian youth and others during the summer. The presbytery has also taken its oversight role seriously, contributing to the ongoing operations of congregations that need assistance.

With a population the size of Oshawa, Ont., and a compact geography, it's not surprising the community is an important part of life in the province. The same is true of the presbytery. Every congregation is interconnected through a family or two — or knows someone whose father is. The sense of community is perhaps sharpest at Christmas, when holly decorates doors and windowsills, candles glow in century-old stained glass windows and family members return to the Island. The presbytery is alive with carol-sings, Advent services, blue Christmas services, pageants and other activities. Congregational events always include a meal. Picture clam chowder, lobster sandwiches and tea strong enough to make a Presbyterian get up and dance.


By most accounts, anyone who attended the 1996 General Assembly held in Charlottetown will think of the presbytery as "the cradle of hospitality." Perhaps that's because, despite its share of trials and tribulations, the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island has remained a cradle of Presbyterian mission and faith. **R**

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Taking time to listen to God speak

How to go on a retreat in the midst of daily life

by Bruce Seebach

A week of guided prayer is a retreat in the midst of daily life. Many of us often long for the opportunity to get away from the busyness of regular activity to spend quiet time with God and be refreshed in our spiritual journey. However, responsibilities, economics, family life or other factors limit opportunities to leave home for retreat centres where that could happen. So instead of going to a retreat, the retreat comes to us in a week of guided prayer that focuses attention upon God's activity in our everyday lives. The underlying premise is that God is interested in communicating with us regularly through prayer.

Format of the week

The structure of the week is simple. The opening two-hour session is held on a Sunday afternoon and provides an opportunity for fellowship between retreatants and those who will companion them throughout the week. It introduces the theme focus and an experience of "praying Scripture" with journaling.

Retreatants are asked to commit themselves to pray privately for 30 minutes daily, using the Scripture passages provided. They also covenant to meet with their spiritual companions at the church for 30 minutes each day, Monday to Friday. The companion supports the retreatant, seeking to keep him or her attentive to God's leading and guiding the retreatant through questions, suggestions and shared experience. A display of books on prayer and spiritual life are made available for purchase or to borrow.

The closing two-hour session on Saturday is a celebration of how and where God has touched us through the week. It offers time for silent reflection, large and small group sharing, and an evaluation of

the week's process. Ongoing opportunities for prayer support are reviewed and, through a communion celebration, retreatants are commissioned to continue the journey and discipline of attending to God's activity in their lives.

Oversight of the week is provided by two coordinators who prayerfully link retreatants with companions and provide support for companions in their ministry as lay people who have been trained in listening. Coordinators and companions meet daily to share in a fellowship meal, reflect upon the experiences of the week and pray together. Coordinators companion each other and the companions so that all participants in the week are praying Scripture and being companioned.

Praying Scripture

Retreatants are invited to use suggested passages of Scripture in a different manner than many are accustomed. The invitation is not to study Scripture as a way of finding knowledge about God. Questions such as who wrote what, to whom, when, where and why are suspended for this daily prayer time. Instead, participants are directed to ask, What does God want to say to *me* through this passage now? They are asked to step into

the Bible with their God-given senses — to see, hear, touch, taste and smell the setting. Using their bodies, retreatants *experience* rather than only *think* about what is taking place. Having experienced the Scripture, they can then ponder its meaning for their future.

It is suggested they might want to see themselves as one of the characters in the Scripture passage or become the one to whom Jesus ministered directly. Or they might imagine God responding to their questions or Jesus speaking to them as they dialogued with him for help. Imagining and the use of imagination become exciting new ways of hearing God speak directly and personally.

Keeping silent

Many have had limited experience of being "still" before God and may feel threatened and uncomfortable. Some ask, "How could I possibly spend even 10 minutes in silent prayer, let alone 30 minutes?" For some, this discipline of quiet solitude requires that they enlist the co-operation of their families. Each needs to find a quiet time, a quiet space, assume a quiet posture, seek a quiet mind and request the leading of the Holy Spirit. Once this is done, retreatants are

Questions for discussion and reflection

- Who has been most influential in assisting growth in my spiritual life? Why?
- What does prayer mean to me? How does it affect my life experience?

For further reading

Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Ave Maria Press, 1974)

Henri Nouwen, *With Open Hands* (Ave Maria Press, 1972)

Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friend — Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction* (Paulist Press, 1980)

Week of Guided Prayer Manual (Week of Guided Prayer Network, Hamilton Conference of The United Church of Canada, 1995)

invited to image or picture the Scripture setting — to place themselves right there with Jesus, talking with him and imagining what he might say.

At the end of a week, one retreatant reported in amazement: “My 30 minutes flew by! I want to keep doing this. The Presence is so very real!” Others who initially found sitting in silence less threatening than using their imagination, or who were convinced the Scripture would not stimulate their imagination, reported discovering that the silence allowed their minds to be open and the flow of feeling and thoughts to be led by the Spirit.

Journeying with a companion

People in congregations do not often talk with each other about their personal prayer journeys or their experiences with God. There are many reasons for this. Some believe their experiences may seem too bizarre, and people might think of them as fanatics. Others worry that their lack of experience or limited knowledge of Scripture might be a real embarrassment and will affect their acceptance by a companion. Companions, however, gently encourage sharing as they listen to the daily journey and pay attention to where they observe God’s movement in the life of the retreatant. They ask questions such as: What stood out for you as you prayed the Scripture? What feeling surfaced as you prayed? What images arose? To what might God be leading you now? One retreatant reported: “I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to talk. Toward the end of the week, I felt such closeness to my companion, I could have gone on for hours.”

Journaling

Retreatants are asked to keep a written record of their week. It is a record of their journey with God. The writing can take the form of a prayer or a love letter to God. It could be a word of thanks in appreciation for awareness or it might be a dialogue they had with Jesus in response to an experience of praying Scripture. It might be an answer to a question that surfaced in the Scriptures, such as Jesus asking, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Sometimes, when pen is placed to paper, retreatants find that previous



Photo by Sophie Faller

blocks are removed and they are able to pour out their hearts to God. They are enabled to express desires and needs that had otherwise remained unspoken. Through journaling many find release for feelings that had not been resolved, memories that had been buried, longings that were unfulfilled, and the love of God and self that had not been acknowledged.

A gift of grace

The changes in people’s lives that happen during a week of guided prayer are a gift of grace. Participants report feeling affirmed by companions who listened to them and encouraged them to greater attentiveness to God. Some report being surprised that God would speak to them personally through the Scriptures. An elderly saint reported: “I have prayed since I was a little girl but I have never imagined that God could feel so close and call me by name!” A young mother equated the experience to childbirth: “Painful but so very rewarding with new life!” A number have indicated that the week of guided prayer has made them aware of their need for spiritual discipline and of the importance of listening, as well as talking with God. Others have found that the week stirred up unresolved

memories and surfaced wounds that have been festering for years, leading them to seek counselling in their desire to be whole.

Ongoing results

Churches have reported a deepening of the spiritual atmosphere as a result of a week of guided prayer. Some report the week encouraged retreatants to reconsider where God is calling them in their ministry as lay folk and in their congregational involvement. Prayer chains, prayer groups, prayer offered in organizational meetings and in decision-making have been the results for some. Volunteers who trained to serve as companions voiced appreciation for the holy privilege of walking with another on a prayer journey. ■

Rev. Bruce Seebach is a retired minister of The United Church of Canada, chair of the Week of Guided Prayer Network of Hamilton Conference (with oversight for 20 weeks of guided prayer during 2002 and 2003), and a member of the Ontario Association of Spiritual Directors.

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly:
www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

A new reformation is happening in global Christianity, says scholar

Miracles and visions are helping to fuel an explosion of faith

by Alex MacLeod

The revolution may not be televised, but that won't stop it. We are in the midst of the most exciting change the church has experienced in over 1,000 years. Pay attention, because you might not hear about it from the CBC or the *Globe and Mail*.

We have all noticed a transformation. Canada looks different and so does the world. From Ghana to China, Brazil to India and Ethiopia to Korea, new people have come, and they keep coming. And many, if not most, are Christians! Africa, Asia and Latin America are making the world increasingly Christian. And yet the coming of global Christianity has gone more or less unheralded.

Philip Jenkins is doing his part to get the word out. Dr. Jenkins is a history professor at Pennsylvania State University and author of *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (see review Nov. 2002). Since 2002 when it was first published, excerpts appeared as a major article in the Oct. 2002 *Atlantic Monthly* (an influential American magazine of ideas and politics) and the book became a bestseller, won several literary prizes and is currently being translated into six languages.

This is a serious work of history that is highly readable and thoroughly engaging. Yet all the hype comes as a surprise to Prof. Jenkins. "I wasn't saying anything radically new. Global Christianity hasn't just arrived in the last few years, but it seems that the shift is only now sinking in for a lot of North American Christians. The assumption appears to have been that Islam is the dominant religion of Africa and Asia. People are learning that the church is actually very, very strong and growing quickly in these parts



Philip Jenkins advises Christians to look to Africa and Asia when discussing the church's future.

of the world. And they're beginning to see what that means for the future."

Jenkins suggests it takes time for people to absorb these realities. "You're not going to have everyone associating Presbyterianism with Ghana or Korea overnight. Scotland will remain the primary Presbyterian country for a lot of Westerners, but that doesn't change the

fact that Accra and Seoul have displaced Glasgow and Edinburgh as centres of Presbyterian life — displaced and, most significantly, outpaced."

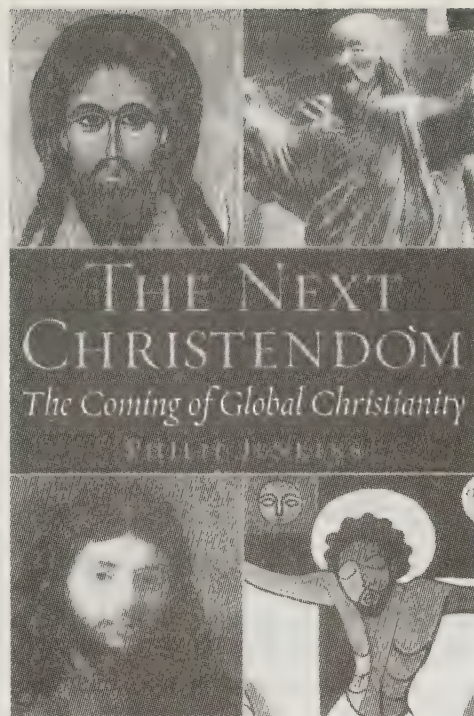
An interview with Philip Jenkins, like a reading of *The Next Christendom*, comes with lots of revealing numbers. By 2050, less than one-fifth of the three billion members of the world's largest

religion will be non-Latino whites. The balance of Christianity has moved decisively away from Europe and North America, and growth in other parts of the world is staggering. From 10 million believers in 1900, the church in Africa has grown to over 360 million today. While birth rates in the world's richest countries are at historic lows, Christians in Latin America, Asia and Africa are fast reproducing, literally and through conversions.

We hear so much about decline in The Presbyterian Church in Canada this is a nice change of pace. Trends in Asia, Africa and Latin America are also reflected in Canada. Without immigration, we would be in even bigger trouble. Some of the most vital, expanding churches in our denomination are Korean, Ghanaian, Egyptian, Caribbean, Chinese, Guyanese and Brazilian, among others. It's no exaggeration to say that, in Canadian urban and suburban settings, mainline Protestant churches that are not becoming multicultural will soon be extinct.

But the news isn't all good. The numbers may raise morale among Christians but they also hint at future problems. Prof. Jenkins does not shrink from identifying points of conflict. He is at his most impressive, and possibly prophetic, in sketching the potential difficulty. Within the emerging next Christendom, cultural differences pose challenges for relations between the booming new churches of the world and the dwindling rich Western churches. Prof. Jenkins also argues compellingly that Islam and Christianity are on a geo-political crash course in some parts of the world.

"The church looks increasingly divided," explains Jenkins. "When some North American and European church leaders say the church needs to change or die out, they seem to be forgetting about a majority of the world's Christians, including immigrant communities in their own countries. For example, there's very little support for gay ordination in the churches of Asia, Latin America and Africa. There's also a greater emphasis laid on the supernatural — miracles, visions, demons and so on. None of this strikes more liberal Westerners as particularly progressive."



The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity by Philip Jenkins (Oxford University Press, 2002, 288 pages, 0195146166, \$36.95).

It would be too simple to label the emerging churches as conservative and Western churches as liberal. There is diversity on both sides. Asians and Africans may be typically more conservative in their theology but, politically, they are often more radical than their North American counterparts.

To illustrate the Christian-Muslim dilemma, Jenkins cites Nigeria as a prime example of a country that is divided almost evenly between the two groups and where there has already been significant religious violence. This explosive potential takes on another dimension as Nigerian oil wealth raises its strategic global profile and a high birth rate propels it to fifth on the list of most populous states in the world by 2050, after India, China, the United States and Indonesia. Lagos, Nigeria's capital, should also be the third largest city of the world in 10 years. About the same time, Nigeria will assume fifth place among Christian countries, behind the United States, Brazil, Mexico and the Philippines.

Christian minorities in predominantly Muslim countries face dire circumstances from Sudan and Egypt to

Pakistan and Indonesia. While acknowledging that Christians have often behaved badly toward Muslims in the past, Jenkins suggests the tide has turned; fuelled by poverty and hard-line clerics, Islam has emerged as the main aggressor in recent years. Fundamentalist Muslim countries that seek to impose a narrow-minded form of *shariah* (Islamic law) on their whole society highlight the growing imbalance; so-called Christian states extend more tolerance. He further points to the case of NATO countries intervening on behalf of Muslims in the former Yugoslavia but doing little to come to the aid of Christians under relentless attack over the 20 years of Sudan's civil war.

When asked how North American Christians might respond to the ongoing revolution in global Christianity, Jenkins urges us to "follow the numbers."

"Realize where the population figures are going and make adjustments," he says. "North American Christianity is affected by these global changes as it becomes much more culturally diverse. Churches need to re-examine how their cultural assumptions exclude people, and it's not enough to simply add drums to their worship. There is also a crying need for rich Christians to share their resources with the world's poor Christians. This would demand a major recommitment to missions and an overhaul of how they are carried out."

The worst-case scenario has wealthy North American churches ignoring what is happening on their doorsteps as well as throughout the rest of the world, pretending nothing has changed. The new global Christianity may offer significant challenges, but there is the potential to make the whole much better than the sum of its parts. **R**

Alex MacLeod lives in downtown Toronto where he works with young adults at Knox Church (Spadina).

Most books reviewed may be purchased through The Book Room, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, Ont. M3C 1J7. Prices include shipping and handling but not GST. Do not send payment with order. An invoice will follow. Please include name and location of congregation. Toll-free order line: 1-800-619-7301. E-mail: bookroom@presbyterian.ca.

Breathless allegations are ultimately empty

Andrew Faiz breezily cracks *The Da Vinci Code*

The *Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown is the sort of book in which the hero has a cleft chin. It is poorly written, with sentences that would have to be finessed to be clunky. To make up for the prose, it is heavily researched, with an overeagerness to use all the research in excited chunks. And it's a quick, breezy read. But that's not the reason it has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list for months or that it was the source of a one-hour documentary special by ABC News.

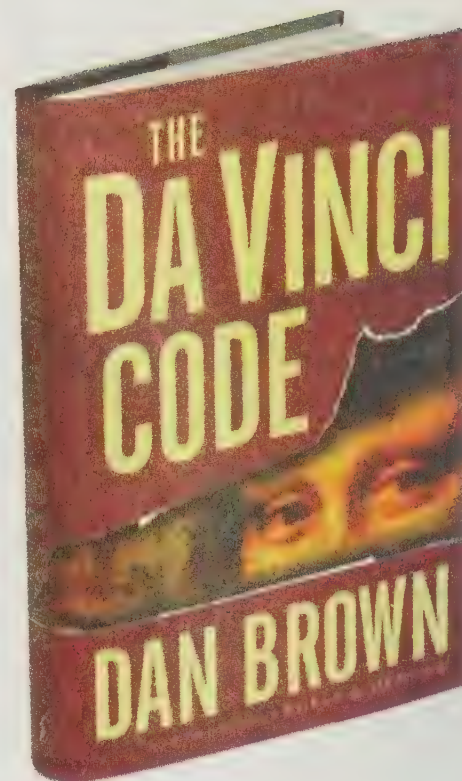
The Da Vinci Code claims to "[unravel] at last ... an astonishing truth concealed for centuries." I'll save you the \$40 and tell you this truth right now: Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute but was Jesus' consort, perhaps even his wife. They had relations and at least one child. (Sit back, take a breath, there's more.) Jesus told Mary she would be the rock, or foundation, on which his church would be built — not Peter. She was his primary disciple and the one he intended to carry on his work. But two centuries after his death, the church, a conspiracy of men, cut Mary out of the deal, handed the legacy to Peter and set up a patriarchal institution that has been the source of many evils over the years. (Take another breath.) All that can mean only one thing (I guess): our faith is a sham faith built on a sham Christ, who was manufactured for the sole purpose of consolidating power. And if you're wondering about the book's title, it seems all of these truths are embedded, coded, in the works of Leonardo da Vinci, who was the head of a secret society that has continued to fight the church for centuries to maintain the truth.

But be under no illusion this is a big

secret. As for conspiracies, this one has been written about in bestsellers for at least a quarter century. I first encountered it in the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Richard Leigh, Henry Lincoln and Michael Baigent, which covered much the same territory. *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels is a more academic approach dealing with related matters. Both of these books are two decades old now. *The Word* by Irving Wallace goes back another decade. In it a gospel written by Christ's brother is found and the business of church, international finance and many other cherished institutions is threatened. The most famous book of this speculative genre would be *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis from 1955. It imagined Christ more as man than God. And, recently, from archaeology, came an ossuary that might have held Jesus' brother's bones — if, that is, Jesus had a brother and if, that is, Jesus was more man than God.

Which is what all of this comes down to: Christ's humanity. Do we worship him because he was a man or because he is God? And what if he were only a man, would we still worship him? Can we still be Easter people if there is no Easter? These are all big questions, and dust jackets flash them breathlessly, which is what dust jackets are supposed to do. But does it matter?

The church, Christianity and our faith are all evolving organisms. True, there is a history, but it doesn't tell the story of who we are today. I read *The Da Vinci Code* without once questioning my faith. It never occurred to me because, while I know the allegations are common — they may even be true — it doesn't matter to me. What matters is the Christ of my



faith: the Christ who is truly approachable, egalitarian and devoted to justice. The One who does not demand the questionable power of wealthy institutions but the needful energy of faithful individuals. And I believe that my church — The Presbyterian Church in Canada — is the perfect institution to make a difference in the world. (I haven't seen enough evidence of this, but I live in faith.)

And anyway, there is a little part of me (and I think of many of us well-educated, comfortable North American Christians) that would love to move the church from Peter to Mary. I realize it would involve a theological cataclysm (he wrote breezily). But Christ was a revolutionary, questioning the ossified theology of his time. And, maybe, two millennia later, in the rising Age of Aquarius, a massive quake is just what the church needs. It'll be a critical test of our faith; but, then again, what's a faith for? **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

obituaries

Cruickshank, Marjorie, died Dec. 8, 2003, in St. Catharines, Ont. Born in Paris, Ont., in 1919, and active in Presbyterian congregations in Paris, London and Dundas, Ont. An honorary life member of WMS. Beloved mother of Rev. Dr. Bob Cruickshank (Joan), Medicine Hat, Alta.; Jan (Bill) Sward, St. Catharines, Ont.; and Dot (Chris) Bergman, Yellowknife, NWT.

Innes, Bonnie E., 75, wife of the late Calvin Innes, long-serving member of Avonton Church, Avonton, Ont., passed away Nov. 10, 2003. Bonnie served her church and community in many ways. Her cheery countenance, generosity and selfless quiet determination to help others will be sadly missed by family, friends and all those people who knew her.

Macintosh, Elizabeth (Bess), passed away Nov. 20, 2003, after a very brief illness, at the age of 100. She was an elder of Knox Presbyterian Church, Selkirk, Man., a member of Knox Guild, WMS, Bible study and sang in the church choir until her death. Bess was a primary school teacher in Selkirk and area for 49 years, retiring in 1971. An enthusiastic supporter of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, Bess was honoured by the club in October as a season's ticket holder for 50 years. She is survived by her nephews, Brian Gilhuly, George and Doug Macintosh, her great nieces and nephews, her many friends in Selkirk and her church family at Knox. A celebration of life was conducted by the Rev. Matthew Brough on Nov. 24 at Knox Presbyterian Church, Selkirk.

MacLellan, Elizabeth M., 91, a member of St. Andrew's, Dartmouth, N.S., for the last four years, widow of the Rev. Dr. W. Lloyd MacLellan, died on Dec. 22, 2003, in Dartmouth, N.S.

Nichol, Lewis, 90, member, Bethel, Riverview, N.B., died in hospital Oct. 31, 2003. Predeceased by his wife, the former Jessie (Mitchell) Nichol.

Roxburgh, Maxwell, 81, lifelong member of Avonton Church, Avonton, Ont., passed away Nov. 15, 2003.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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Little Narrows, NS; Whycocomagh, St. Andrew's. Rev. Dr. Floyd R. McPhee, 40 Big Marsh Rd., RR 1, River Denys, NS B0E 2Y0; 902-756-3154; cfmcphree@ns.sympatico.ca.

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Riverview, NB, Bethel. Rev. Ruth Houtby, 36 Bridge St., Sackville, NB E4L 3N7; 506-536-3786; rhoutby@nb.sympatico.ca.

Saint John, NB, St. Matthew's. Rev. Dr. Paul Brown, c/o Canadian Bible Society, 117 Germain St., Saint John, NB E2L 2E9; 506-634-1760; Fax 506-634-0454; pbrown@biblesociety.ca.

Summerside, PEI, Summerside Church. Rev. Ian C. Glass, 15 Messer Ave., Charlottetown, PEI C1A 6N5; 902-892-1463; glassicjr@pei.sympatico.ca.

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The night the horses ate the preacher's truck

Choose to focus on God's goodness rather than on gouges in the paint

by David Webber

‘**W**hat on earth did you do to the pickup, Linda?’

“Don’t you remember? I drove it home last night, David.”

“Exactly, you drove it home and now the paint is covered with great gouges right down to the metal. What did you do to it?” I was ranting, as is my custom in dealing with any crisis.

“As I said, I drove it home, David. You were there, remember?”

I stormed back out to the yard where our 4x4 was parked. Linda followed, and I began to point accusingly to large, deep scratches in the paint on the hood, on the side-door panels, and even on the chrome grill and mirror. Each gouge was garnished with a trail of what looked like half-eaten bits of hay.

Linda took one look and chuckled. “Well, dear, I reckon the horses ate your truck.”

“What!” I screamed, losing every last bit of my composure. “You’re telling me the darned horses ate my truck?”

“I reckon so, Cowboy. Last night at the Red Willow Ranch, their remuda of dude horses was loose in the yard, don’t you remember? Well, horses love to chew on painted surfaces, especially automotive paint, especially when it is seasoned with winter road salt. That’s why Dad would never let our ranch horses run loose in the yard.”

I grunted some near-profanity, turned around and patted a tire with my best kick and muttered: “It was such a good night last night, and the darned horses had to go and eat my truck. It’s going to



cost hundreds of dollars to fix. I'm going to have to paint the whole thing."

"Or not," Linda said. "What are a few scratches on a 4x4? Besides, it'll make for a good story to tell your grandson. Get some perspective, Cowboy."

With that, Linda wandered back into the house, leaving me to fume it out alone in the yard. Eventually, I recovered enough to drive down to the local gas station. As Kathy, the owner, began to fill the pickup with diesel fuel, she said, "Gee whiz, Preacher, I see some horses have been eating on your truck." No less than 10 people that day greeted me the same way. By the time I arrived home for supper, I was seriously irked.

Later that night, Linda, who tends to laugh too much and never take anything seriously enough for me, gave me another lecture as we sat in bed before falling asleep. She recalled how great it had been going out to the Red Willow Ranch for house church the night before, how the February sky was lit with so many stars it was almost as bright as if the moon were full, how the house church meeting had been filled with such sweet singing, sharing and praying, how the trip home had been so beautiful I had asked her to drive so I could look more closely at the wonderful northern lights, how we had arrived home safely despite the awful road conditions, how we had shared a nice cup of hot apple cider vinegar and a chat before bed, and how contentedly each of us had slept. She then invited me to stack all that up alongside the few nicks in the pickup, which I noticed the following morning and chose to focus on all day. I rolled over in bed and began my prayers with my usual: "Well, Lord, it's me again. Let me tell you how I blew it today."

We are entering the season that John Calvin called "the superstitious observance of Lent." I like the season of Lent for its opportunity to reflect on my personal use of God's gift of free choice (another topic Calvin didn't seem to be too fussy about). I know I am not a good one at holding onto what my wife calls "a Christian perspective." Some of this comes from attitudes formed in my past, long before Christ walked into my life. Some comes from an upbringing that was often rooted in pessimism. And

some comes from circumstances I experience that are beyond my control. But one thing I am beginning to come to terms with is that a Christian outlook, which is by definition an attitude of and aptitude for hope, is mainly rooted in choice — my choice.

In Paris, there is a famous painting by Marie Augustin Zwiller called *The First Night Outside Paradise*. In it, Adam and Eve are depicted as preparing to spend their first night in the desert beyond Eden. The figure of an angel with a flaming sword can be seen in the distance, but

A Christian outlook, which is by definition an attitude of and aptitude for hope, is mainly rooted in choice

the eyes of these two exiles are not fixed on him. They are gazing far above his head. There, outlined in light, faint but unmistakable, Zwiller has painted a cross. In wondering awe, their gaze is fastened on it.


Zwiller's famous painting is all about choice and its effect on perspective. It illustrates choice in terms of what to focus on. It also illustrates faith. Faith, it seems to me, is much more than mere belief. It includes the choice to focus one's life on what a providential God of love has done and is about to do in unleashing his love in one's life. Faith and hope seem to go together like apple pie and cheddar cheese. And all of this is the ground of Christian perspective; it is where a Christian outlook of hope is rooted.

I have always been drawn to the ancient pagan Greek philosophers. The majority of these famous thinkers did not regard hope as a virtue but merely as a temporary illusion (hence their attraction for me, I expect). Paul was exactly right in giving an accurate description of the Greek and Roman pagan viewpoint when he said they had "no hope" (Ephesians 2:12, 1 Thessalonians 4:13). He stated his fundamental reason for saying this was that they were "without God" — "without faith" in a providential sover-

eign and loving God. On the other hand, Peter talked about the Christian having a "living hope" — a hope that is eternal because it is rooted in faith in the eternal God of resurrection (1 Peter 1:3-6). And faith is a choice to focus one's life on this God, on God's power, on God's love and on the great things a loving, powerful God is going to do in one's life and in the world.

Faith and hope ("like peas and carrots," Forrest Gump would say), and choice is the butter that makes them work. My Lenten project this year is to

examine my use of the gift of choice, to try to choose to focus my life on the God of resurrection, to choose to stop living as though my attitudes and perspective are victims of circumstance and begin to realize they are a product of choice and faith. Shucks, what are things like a few nicks in a pickup truck compared to what a Creator-Redeemer God is doing in my life, in the life of my neighbour and in the life of the world. Have a happy Lent!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials" (1 Peter 1:3-6). 

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen* and *And the Aspens Whisper*.



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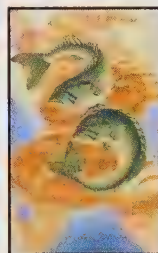
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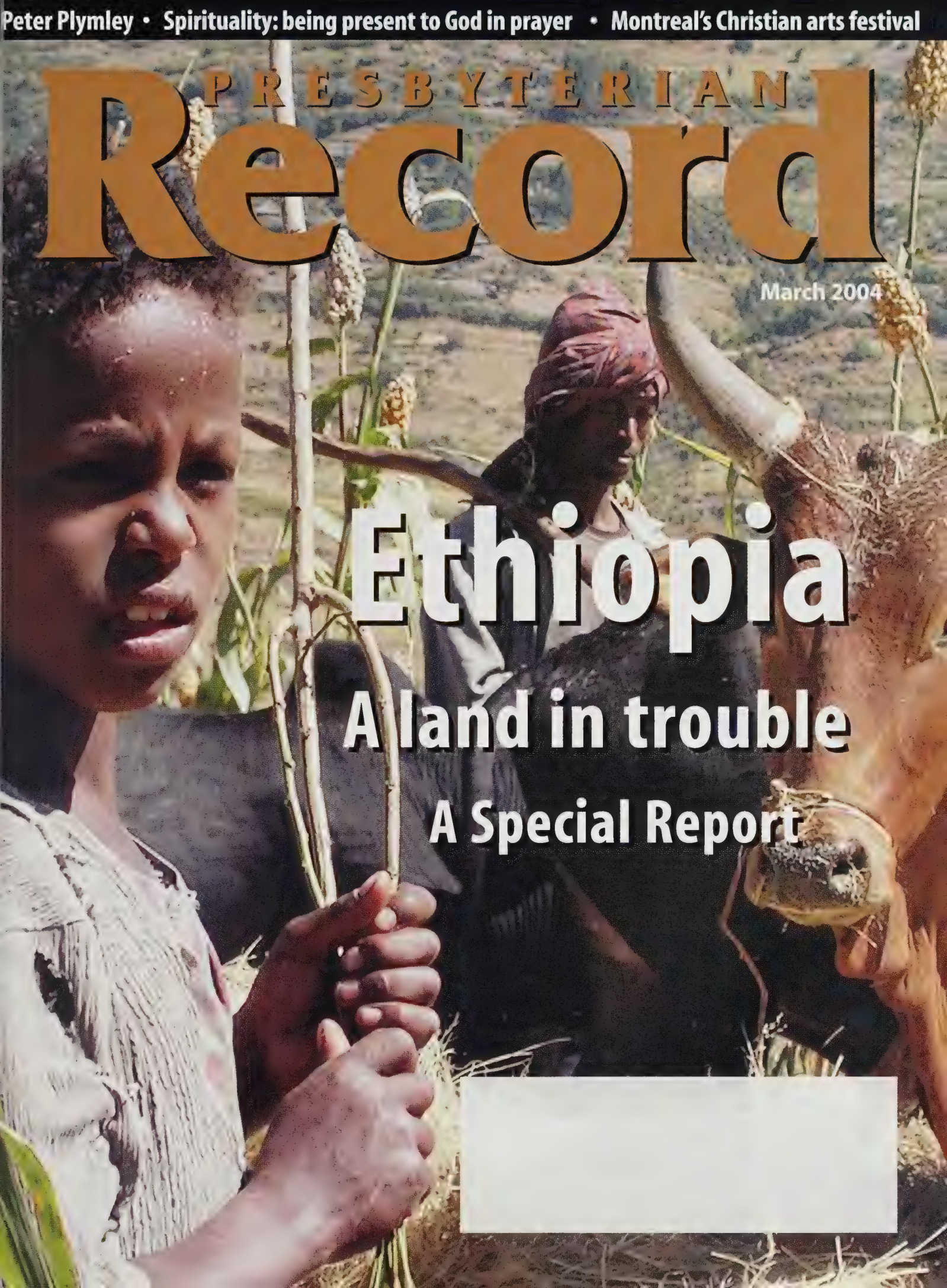
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Ethiopia

A land in trouble

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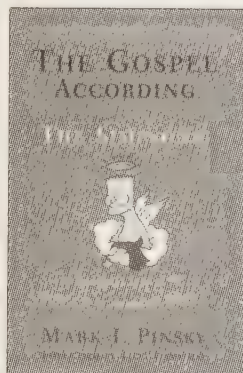


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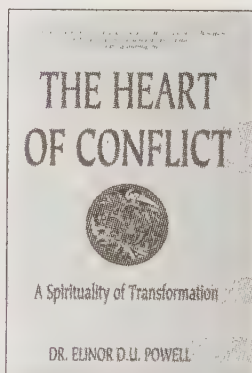


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Suffering with the Ethiopians is not optional for Christians

Over the next two months, the *Record* will be featuring a special report on Ethiopia. Once known as the breadbasket of Africa, Ethiopia is not only facing a famine worse than the one in 1984, it is facing it under the growing shadow of HIV/AIDS.

Speaking to about 500 people in Toronto's Calvin Church recently, Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary General's special envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, put it bluntly: "Ethiopia is a huge worry for us." Why? Fourteen million people face starvation in a country of about 67 million. More than two million people have AIDS, and there are more than one million AIDS orphans. An international group of parliamentarians who visited the country in January said the magnitude of AIDS-related problems in the country is "great and overwhelming." One out of every 10 people with AIDS in the world is an Ethiopian.

All this has happened in the only country in Africa that, with the exception of the brief Italian occupation from 1936-41, has resisted colonization. It has many rivers and, at one time, had more than enough fertile land. Unfortunately, wretched government policies in the last century, North American protectionism that hinders Ethiopia's exports and a 1929 treaty with Egypt that prevents Ethiopia (and nine other African countries) from using the waters of the Nile to develop irrigation have all combined with several prolonged droughts to cripple the country. A terrible two-and-a-half-year war with Eritrea that ended in 2000 has also contributed massively to the country's problems.

In the ancient world, Ethiopia was the land where Homer said the Greek gods went to feast. Christianity arrived in 340 and has changed little since then. When Muslim conquerors swept through most of North Africa shortly after Muhammad's death in 632, Ethiopia was the lone Christian holdout (but about half the country is Muslim now).

Today, Ethiopians are as proud of their heritage as ever — perhaps too proud, say some observers, in that they are reluctant to ask for help until it's almost too late. In December, *Presbyterian Record* reporter Amy Sedlezky accompanied a Canadian Foodgrains Bank tour of northern Ethiopia to see how aid from Canadian Christians is being delivered and managed. (The Presbyterian Church is one of the constituent owners of the foodgrains bank.) Ms. Sedlezky found a complex situation: people who are as warm and generous as any but who

are reluctant to adopt modern farming practices, people whose faith runs deep but whose devotional practices are preventing them from being productive.

The ancient Christianity that sustains people through their terrible trials also contributes to their predicament through encouraging an acceptance of one's lot in life. And unlike most parts of the world where the church has nurtured education (whether the great universities of Europe founded by religious orders, such as in Paris and Oxford, or the first universities in Canada), this has not happened in Ethiopia. Less than half of Ethiopia's population is literate. It is a problem the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Paulos, is aware of. Mr. Lewis said he has been working closely with the patriarch to try to educate people about AIDS; but, although there are 300,000 priests, they are not well educated themselves.

Some of the country's problems are the result of bad decisions by successive governments; many are the result of the rich world's political and trade manoeuvres over the past two centuries. Asked how to defend helping a country so far away against cold-hearted critics, Mr. Lewis said people should simply raise the issue of our common humanity: it is treating and caring for others as we would want to be treated were we in such a dire situation. For Christians, our understanding of the body of Christ imposes an even greater level of obligation to our brothers and sisters in the faith. As St. Paul wrote, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it."

Canada contributes less than 0.3 per cent of its GDP to foreign aid (less than half what we said should be our goal in a 1970 UN agreement). That's barely enough to qualify as a cup of water. It is not an option for the children of the God of Abraham — Jews, Christians and Muslims — to care for the starving, the poor and the orphaned. We must all pressure our government to increase the foreign aid budget. And we must continue to support the church and its workers with our gifts and prayers.

David Harris

Exchange of views essential editorial policy

Kudos to the *Record* for publishing Liz Campbell's letter (Nov. 2003) in which she suggests we owe respect to other faiths. Publishing opposing views is essential editorial policy and should not appall anyone, least of all a believer biblically instructed to observe the greatest commandment of all — to love.

Further, a letter in the *Record* by W. Slimmon (January issue) states, "To debate God's Word or to argue against any part puts all of it in question and leaves us with nothing to cling to." This is a dangerous way to think and excludes exploration into mystical matters that can enhance spiritual growth, a natural response to universal spiritual hunger.

Many destructive cults flourish when not one member will challenge an expounded perverse "biblical belief." The Jim Jones mass suicide comes to mind, as well as the Davidian massacre, both extreme examples fuelled by people who would not challenge warped interpretations of the Bible.

Envisioning a future built on religious co-operation and mutual respect by all faiths, rather than fixating on who does

what with whom behind closed doors, seems more appropriate than stalling progress with unchallenged dogma.

I believe there is only one God, one historical Jesus now with God in Heaven, and the ubiquitous mystical Holy Spirit indwelling the souls of many on Earth. We also have the divinely created, orderly physical universe in which to live and prosper and its vast dimensions to explore. Let's *all* rejoice.

J. Gordon Neal,
Whitby, Ont.

Spirituality must be tested

I deeply appreciated Rev. Helen Smith's essential connection between the vertical (God-human) and the horizontal (human-human) dimensions of our relationships in *Spirituality and Justice for All* (January *Record*). Spirituality easily degenerates into an individualistic fantasy unless it is tested by matter. "Matter is our infallible judge," said Simone Weil, the French activist and mystic. In other words, unless it is tested on the ground, in Spirit-led action, our spirituality remains vacuous.

Nick Athanasiadis,
Toronto

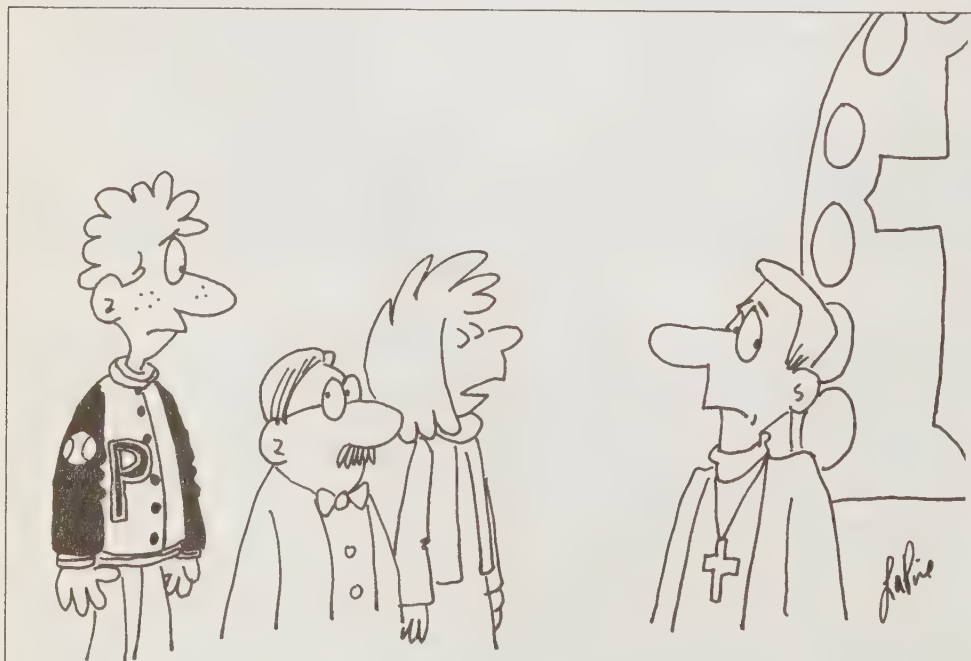
Look at homosexuality in perspective

We were sorry to read the many negative, misinformed comments regarding same-sex relationships in the January *Record*. In his book *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*, Rev. Peter J. Gomes makes the following statement: "The biblical writers never contemplated a form of homosexuality in which loving, monogamous, and faithful persons sought to live out the implications of the gospel with as much fidelity to it as any heterosexual believer. All they knew of homosexuality was prostitution, pederasty, lasciviousness, and exploitation. These vices, as we know, are not unknown among heterosexuals, and to define contemporary homosexuals only in these terms is a cultural slander of the highest order, reflecting not so much prejudice, which it surely does, but what the Roman Catholic Church calls 'invincible ignorance,' which all of the Christian piety and charity in the world can do little to conceal. The 'problem,' of course, is not the Bible, it is the Christians who read it."

For us, much of the understanding of the Christian homosexual relationship comes down to the simple phrase *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est* (Where there is charity and love, there also is God).

If God is Love, then a relationship in which love abides, whether it be between two men, two women or a man and a woman, must be pleasing to God because God is part of that relationship.

Paul Cooper and David Hiebert,
London, Ont.
Alicia Cooper,
Waterloo, Ont.



"Pastor, forgive us our procrastination. Please baptize our baby Trevor for us."

I am endlessly mystified, confused and shocked to read the continued fascination that the *Presbyterian Record* and its readers have with the question of homosexuality. Not to mention the embarrassment and frustration I feel at the low level of debate and lack of erudite insight on the entire matter. Is our denomination's corporate imagination so bereft that we cannot find other things to talk

and think and write about? Regardless of the stance one takes on the question of homosexuality, it is impossible to deny that the Bible gives the issue very little attention. A few short verses in a book the size of the Bible hardly warrants the unblinking focus we place on the issue these days. Why, I wonder, are there not more articles and letters on topics the Bible does pay significant attention to such as suffering, healing, poverty, giving, grace and justice? Is it because those issues demand more of our intellect and our faith than we are willing to sacrifice? I hope not, for then the Presbyterian Church surely is a denomination that deserves to be dwindling in size and dying.

*Johanna Cardiff,
Toronto, Ont.*

Throughout its history, the Christian church has engaged in passionate disagreement involving the interpretation of the Bible. In the fourth century, Christians in Alexandria claiming scriptural support for their positions engaged in street fights over the question of whether Jesus was "begotten" or "created." In the 19th century, slave owners and abolitionists passionately appealed to Scripture to support their opposing points of view. In the 1960s, some Christians quoted the Bible to support segregation and all-white churches while other Christians rode freedom buses and sat at lunch counters claiming a biblical mandate for civil disobedience. Our own denominational history has included passionate disagreement over organs, Church Union and the ordination of women as ministers and elders. In each case, the opposing sides claimed scriptural support for their positions. Some church conflicts led to physical violence. Most led to painful broken relationships. All held manifestations of attitudes and behaviours that dishonoured Christ and devalued people.

The current debate regarding sexual orientation is especially volatile. Once again, opposing sides stake a claim to a piece of moral high ground by claiming scriptural support for their points of view. My reading of the Bible, understanding of the gospel Jesus preached

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and personal friendships with gay and lesbian individuals, couples and ministers lead me to support the full acceptance of gays and lesbians in society, in marriage and as church leaders and ministers. I understand why others have different points of view.

I think there is great wisdom in the cautiously tolerant position taken by Gamaliel the Pharisee in Acts 5:38-39. When addressing the council determined to execute Peter and other believers for preaching in the temple, he said: "If this [Peter's] ... undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them — in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"

In my view, gay and lesbian ministers are currently providing effective and Christ-centred ministry in the church, and the opportunity for gay and lesbian couples to marry is a positive change in society. It does, however, take time to discern when a change is "of God." In the meantime, it is important to recognize that all of us in the Presbyterian Church — with our diversity of opinions, beliefs, experiences, perceptions, orientations and interpretations of Scripture — are brothers and sisters caught in the one net of the love of God.

*Keith Boyer
Barrie, Ont.*

What really happened in Fiji

I read with interest *They Prefer Chicken Now* (January News Briefs) about the cannibalization of Rev. Thomas Baker in Fiji. Seven others, including a native minister and six native students, were killed with Mr. Baker that Sunday, July 21, 1867. A native teacher and another student escaped.

The popular reason for the attack, that Mr. Baker touched the head of a tribal chief, is probably not true. He had been in Fiji for eight years, so it is unlikely he was unaware of native customs. He knew he was in dangerous territory and would not have acted in such a brazen manner. There was also no evidence from the two survivors and from two native guides who had remained in the chief's village after Baker's party had left that he had

offended the local chief at any time.

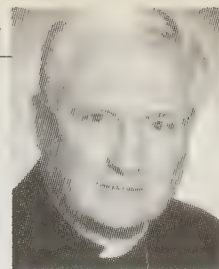
Rather, there were several other more plausible reasons for the attack. Mr. Baker, perhaps overly ambitious, had ventured far into the interior of the island against the advice of other missionaries and native friends. Tribal warfare was still common in many parts of the Fiji islands, and Mr. Baker would likely have been viewed in the interior not only as an unwelcome missionary but also as an agent of an enemy tribe living closer to the coastline where the missionary stations were located. There is also credence to a story that another chief, who held a grudge against Mr. Baker, had sent a whale's tooth from village to village preceding Baker's party. Several village chiefs refused it, but the tooth was finally accepted by the chief who would be Baker's executioner. The whale's tooth, it seems, was similar to placing a contract on someone's life.

My interest in this story stems from the fact that my great-grandfather, Rev. Jesse Carey, was a Methodist missionary in Fiji from 1859 to 1875 and was superintendent of the circuit in which Mr. Baker was ministering. Shortly after the massacre, a Fijian New Testament, dropped by one of the murdered native students during the attack, was delivered to Mr. Carey, and I am fortunate to have this wonderful artifact. The name of its murdered owner, Neamani R(aqio), is inscribed inside the front cover. By the way, Jesus' name in Fijian is Jisu Karisito.

*Phil Carey,
Oakville, Ont.*

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

Correction: Although the Presbytery of Calgary-Macleod covers a large area, a typographical error in the *January Record* (p. 37) made it even larger. The presbytery extends eastward as far as the Saskatchewan border, not Saskatoon. (All members of the presbytery can breathe easier now.)



Following Jesus' example in Romania

A community of faith meets resistance with courage and serenity

The month of March brings to mind the saying about how March comes and goes — like a lion or like a lamb. March also means more daylight and the first day of spring. For the community of faith, March is within the fourth season of the Christian year — Lent. In this period, we are invited to reflect on the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, to the Upper Room, to Gethsemane and eventually to Calvary, and what that journey means for us.

Two scenes in this journey are my favourites: one where Jesus set his face resolutely to go toward Jerusalem despite the hostility of the religious and political authorities (Luke 9:51, 53); the other, Gethsemane, particularly when Jesus emerged from the garden with serenity, even though the betrayal by Judas was imminent.

These two scenes come to my mind when I reflect on the visit Rev. Dr. Ronald Wallace, my wife, Chris, and I made to Hungarian Reformed churches in Romania in late September 2003. There we found a community of faith facing many significant challenges, some posed by the political authorities with the apparent collusion of the leadership of the Orthodox Church. Because of the changes in the boundaries of countries after the First and Second World Wars, many Hungarians found themselves living in Romania where they are a minority.

For many years after the Second World War, Romania was governed by a Communist regime that confiscated most of the schools operated by the church and made it difficult for the church to carry on its life and work. When the Communist regime fell, the new government promised to return the schools to



Hungarian children with Brian Johnston in front of a church in Inaktelke, Romania.

the church, but this is happening extremely slowly. The schools that have been returned are usually in a poor state of repair and have very little equipment or furniture.

While it is true that communism fell several years ago, many of the leaders of the communist period still hold political authority. With the current regime having a strong nationalistic flavour, Hungarians find themselves in a difficult position. I was very troubled by some government practices. In one city, the mayor makes sure the Romanian flag is prominently displayed in areas where Hungarians live and that water hydrants and other municipal property are painted with the colours of the Romanian flag. In another city, an Orthodox church is being erected with government support close to the Hungarian Reformed Church even though there is no Orthodox congregation to occupy

the building. Despite these and other adverse circumstances, we met a community of faith facing resistance from political and religious leadership with courage and serenity. They are nourished and strengthened by the example of Jesus, who set his face resolutely to go to Jerusalem and who emerged from Gethsemane with quiet composure.

We were pleased to meet church leaders and theological students with their professors. Two seminary students accompanied us on a daylong tour of part of Romania. This gave us an opportunity to learn more about them, their faith and their aspirations. On Sunday, we worshipped with a large number of people in a small village. The service was much like ours, except the preacher kindly gave an abbreviated version of the sermon in English before preaching the longer version for the congregation!

Afterwards, we met the men of the congregation outside the church; the women and children, as is their custom, had gone home immediately after the service. We were graciously entertained for lunch by the families of the two pastors of the church.

Our guide, Dr. David Pandy-Szekeres, is a Presbyterian staff member in Central Europe. He provided us with a wealth of historical background and a clear picture of the current challenges facing the church. He was ably assisted by two other Presbyterian staff in Romania — Brian Johnston and Sonya Henderson, both of whom are involved in the work of a seminary in the city of Clug. Brian's principal task is teaching music, and we were treated to a brief recital by the seminary choir he directs. (A CD made by the choir while on tour in Canada is available at The Book Room at church offices.) Sonya's principal task is teaching English. We had the opportunity to attend a concert and one seminar at the International Disabled Conference, which Sonya had a major role in organizing as part of her work with handicapped people.

It was no surprise to find that these Canadian Presbyterians working with Hungarian Reformed Christians in this area are very much appreciated by church leaders, theological students and seminary professors. Please remember them in your prayers. And remember the leaders and people of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania as they seek to cope with circumstances that are vexing and distressing.

My diary from Nov. 1/03 to Jan. 15/04:
Anniversary speaker at St. Andrew's, Stratford, Calvin, Toronto, Knox, Guelph, all in Ontario, and at Iona, Dartmouth, N.S. and First Sackville, Lower Sackville, N.S. Preached at Evangel Hall, Toronto, St. Andrew's, Moncton, N.B., Knox College, Toronto, Zion Church, East River - St. Mary's, N.S., and at the rededication service at Westminster-St. Paul's, Guelph, Ont. Conducted the service on Dec. 28 at Bethel Church, Scotsburn, N.S., where I also baptized the triplets (Matthew, Isaac and Charlotte) of the minister, Rev. Lara

Scholey, and her spouse, Dr. Carl Adams. Addressed the Assembly Council, the WMS executive, national office staff and two events at St. Andrew's, Guelph, Ont. Spoke about our trip to Central Europe at St. Andrew's, Dartmouth, and at the Halifax-Lunenburg presbyterial of the Atlantic Mission Society.

Sandy McDonald

Moderator's itinerary

March 21

St. Columba, Saint John, N.B.

March 27

West Toronto men's breakfast (a.m.)
St. Andrew's, Thorold, Ont. (p.m.)

March 28

60th anniversary
West St. Andrew's, St. Catharines, Ont.

March 28-30

Assembly Council, Crieff, Ont.

March 31

St. Andrew's (King St.), Toronto

April 1

St. Mark's, Toronto

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Sally Armour Wotton trained and worked in the New York City theatre throughout the 1960s. She, along with Kelly Walker and Alexandra Caverly Lowery, founded Sacred Acts - a consortium of artists who facilitate events in worship, education or the workplace across Canada. Sally teaches her course Acting For Non-Actors to private groups and at Queen's University and Centennial College. Her creative writing is published extensively.

Register by April 16, 2004 Phone 416 463-5395
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Ecumenical leaders named to Order of Canada

Janet Sommerville, a former general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches and a well-known advocate for interfaith understanding, has been named a Member of the Order of Canada. Ms. Sommerville, who was the first woman and the first Roman Catholic to become general secretary of the church council, was cited as a "gracious yet forceful leader" who "helped create a model of ecumenism admired worldwide" and who "continues to be a strong voice on global social issues."



Photo by Art Babych

Janet Sommerville

Also included in the list of appointments announced by Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson on Jan. 27 was Ernie Regehr, director of Project Ploughshares (see news item, p. 13), who was named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Uganda tells U.S. bishops to stay away from enthronement

NAIROBI, KENYA — Uganda's Anglican Church has installed a new archbishop but told Anglican representatives from the United States to stay away from the enthronement ceremony because of the election of an openly gay bishop in the U.S. church.

"We have cancelled their invitation," said Rev. Stanley Ntagali, provincial secretary of the Ugandan Church, before the enthronement of Rt. Rev. Henry Orombi as archbishop of the (Anglican) Church of the Province of Uganda.

Most Rev. Frank Griswold, presiding bishop of the U.S. Episcopal Church, had originally said his church would join other Anglican churches from around the world in sending a deputation to Mr. Orombi's enthronement. But late last year, Mr. Ntagali wrote to Bishop Griswold saying no delegation from the U.S. church would be "welcomed, received or seated" at the ceremony because of the election of Canon Gene Robinson, an openly gay priest, as a bishop in the U.S. church.

ENI

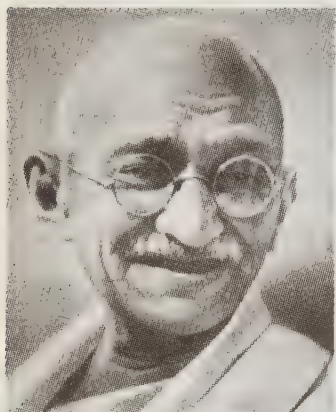
Presbyterians participate in ecumenical service

Two Presbyterians were among those who participated in an ecumenical service for Christian unity held at Notre Dame Cathedral in Ottawa on Jan. 19.

Taking part were: (L-R) Rev. Andrew Johnston, minister of St. Andrew's who chairs the Christian Council of the Capital Area; Peter Winter of the Presbytery of Ottawa; Very Rev. Shane Parker of Christ Church Cathedral; Archbishop Marcel Gervais of Notre Dame Cathedral; Fr. Alex Michalopoulos, Dormition of the Theotokos, Greek Orthodox Church; and Rev. Shane Lawson of the United Church Presbytery of Ottawa.



Photo by Art Babych



Learn from Gandhi, say anti-globalization activists

MUMBAI, INDIA — The World Social Forum has ended in Mumbai, India, with a call to use "people's power" to counter the consequences of globalization by learning from Mahatma Gandhi, who used non-violent

struggle to lead India to independence from Britain.

"To fight globalization, you need to fight the way Mahatma Gandhi fought with the strength of the masses. People's power is a new factor in international politics," India's former president Kocheil Raman Narayanan told tens of thousands of people at the gathering's closing ceremony. "This movement is one of the most significant in history."

At the same time, a People's Forum, jointly organized by the Christian Conference of Asia and the National Council of Churches in India, condemned the "unjust world trade system and agreements that continue to impoverish the people of Asia-Africa."

The World Social Forum was launched in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as a counter to the World Economic Forum, an annual gathering of politicians and business leaders in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos.

ENI

Study indicates teens use Internet as religious resource

U.S. teens, 13 to 17, who have access to the Internet report using it for religious purposes three times more often than using it for pornography, according to the National Study of Youth and Religion. The study reports that the Web has become a significant place of connection for a sizable number of teens who are religious.

Christian Century



Russian church issues 'Ten Commandments' to promote clean business

WARSAW — The Russian Orthodox Church is trying to improve the ethical climate of the country's economy through a set of guidelines for entrepreneurs, business leaders and trade unionists, inspired by the Ten Commandments.

"Wealth is not an end in itself. It must serve the creation of a good life for the individual and the nation," is one of the commandments contained in the Code of Moral Principles and Rules for Running the Economy, issued by the church at the beginning of February. Another commandment states: "A human being is not a continuously working mechanism: he also needs time for relaxation, spiritual life and creative progress."

The publication of the code comes against a background of growing concern over graft and mismanagement in Russia, rated one of the world's most corrupt countries in a survey by the Berlin-based Transparency International anti-corruption organization in late 2003. The code states the guidelines are "based on the Ten Commandments given to humanity by God" and are intended for "participants in economic processes." The health of the economy "directly depends on the spiritual and moral state of the human person," the code adds, urging Russians to show "concern for the good of neighbour, society and homeland."

In its code, the church said it would press for the separation of political and economic power, urge business people to keep agreements and pay taxes, and ensure a competitive economy is not "used to justify lying and fraud."

Russia's *Vedomosti* daily newspaper said church leaders would ask business leaders and state officials to endorse the code at a series of meetings, adding that some company directors were looking to the church to "mediate between business and government." ENI

Project Ploughshares attacks missile defence proposal

by Tom Dickey

The relevance and effectiveness of contemporary security policies and forces must be measured by the extent to which they address and mitigate the ways in which people and communities experience insecurity. The most immediate threats to the security of people come in the form of unmet basic needs, denial of basic rights, political exclusion, social and political disintegration, and the related escalation of criminal and political violence."

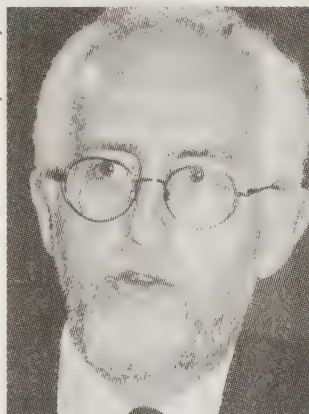
According to Ernie Regehr, author of the above statement, the ecumenical community in Canada can contribute "in a major way" to discussions about how the federal government and its new prime minister should shape Canada's foreign defence policy. Ernie Regehr may not be a household name to most Presbyterians, but he is someone who needs little introduction in ecumenical and political circles. As executive director and co-founder of Project Ploughshares (an ecumenical agency of the Canadian Council of Churches established in 1976 to implement the churches' imperative to pursue peace and justice), Mr. Regehr has spent a major part of his life addressing the unmet basic needs of people everywhere. His role as "one of Canada's most prominent and respected voices on international disarmament and peace" was recognized in January when he was named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Ernie Regehr was a special guest speaker at a meeting of the International Affairs Committee held at church offices in Toronto, Jan. 22-23. Given the unenviable task of condensing more than 30 years of experience into a 60-minute time frame, Mr. Regehr talked to the committee members about the different ways the church can approach issues of national security and defence. Unencumbered by the formality of written statements, he presented a kind of "state of the nations" look at domestic and foreign defence policy.

One of the most obvious facts, Mr. Regehr says, is that there has been no consensus on defence policy since the Cold War evaporated. Canadians are clearly divided over how the country's security needs should be met. There is debate within the military as well. Mr. Regehr mentioned official briefing sessions on Bosnia and Iraq he attended, where soldiers spoke with "evangelical fervour" about a new role for military forces as peacekeepers and rebuilders. There is also a strong sense that Canada must do its part to defend its borders and

large it's difficult to know where to begin, says Mr. Regehr. Any buildup of missiles will only lead to more buildup, he points out. "The U.S. has proven you can hit a bullet with a bullet, but then all the enemy needs are two bullets." Furthermore, the BMD system the United States is advocating is meant primarily as a deterrent against the newest rogue nation, North Korea. It offers no protection against more traditional adversaries such as Russia, which has missiles that can be launched on a moment's notice, or China, Mr. Regehr says.

Photo by Art Babych



The challenge is to find new ways to intervene — to find something between outdated, blue beret peacekeeping and all-out war

Ernie Regehr

those of North America. As Prime Minister Paul Martin has put it, "We are one of the world's most open economies, depending very much on global order and stability for our prosperity and security."

Canadian values will always encourage efforts toward international peace and security out of a deeply held sense of common humanity, Mr. Regehr says. At the same time, Canadians also recognize their own long-term security depends on "a stable, prosperous rules-based international order." The challenge is to find new ways to intervene — to find something between outdated, blue beret peacekeeping and all-out war that has drastic results on so many people.

When it comes to the issue of Ballistic Missile Defence, however, there is a strong consensus, at least among the ecumenical community. The outrage is so

Defence and security are multilateral matters. Certainly Canada cannot defend itself without help from the United States. Like their neighbours to the south, Canadians cannot sit back sanguinely when it comes to the possibility of North Korean missiles.

Clearly the United States would like Canada, a country recognized as a champion of international law, on side when it comes to BMD. The irony of the current Canadian debate, Mr. Regehr says, is that it seems to be based on the perception that Canada is somehow in debt to the United States because it declined to participate in the war on Iraq — a war conducted without the sanction of the United Nations. It appears Canada is obliged to make amends or pay a price.

What Canada and the ecumenical community must do, however, is pursue a course that humankind has pursued throughout its history. A way must be found to provide security for all while beating ballistic missiles (metaphorically, at least) into ploughshares.

The issue of Ballistic Missile Defence will be a part of the International Affairs Committee report to this year's General Assembly. **R**

Many evangelical Protestants in Quebec are French, urban and hip

Christian arts festival comes to Montreal

by Harvey Shepherd

There are not many evangelical Protestants in Quebec, but an upcoming arts festival in Montreal demonstrates that some of them are urban, hip and grounded in Quebec's French-language culture. OK, it's true the organizers of Transformation: Arts, Christ and Culture, March 18-24, are bringing in a keynote speaker from the U.S. Bible Belt (he's originally from England); but Colin Harbinson, dean of arts at a Christian liberal arts college in Mississippi, stands out in a group of otherwise local painters, filmmakers and musicians who straddle the linguistic divide nicely.

It will not be Harbinson's first visit to Quebec. In 1979, fresh from England, he taught briefly in Quebec's Eastern Townships for the parachurch organization Youth With A Mission. Then he moved to Cambridge, Ont., with the same organization and set up several arts-in-ministry endeavours, offshoots of which still exist. He founded, and still heads, an International Festival of the Arts, which has had projects in, particularly, Russia, Bulgaria and China. He was invited to the Montreal festival by his friend Pierre LeBel, Canadian director of Youth With A Mission, also known as YWAM (rhymes with Hi, Sam) — or, more often in Quebec, Jeunesse en Mission.

YWAM Montreal, one of two sponsors of Transformation, belongs to a loose international confederation that ships young people around the planet for mission and educational projects. Someone, LeBel boasts, once described YWAM as "the very first postmodern missions organization."

YWAM's partner in Transformation is the uniquely Québécois Christian Direction, a parachurch organization where they answer the phone, "Direction Chrétienne, bonjour." Among other things, Christian Direction and its executive director, Glenn Smith, a Western Canada transplant who belongs to a French-language Mennonite congregation, analyze statistics, try to help Protestants stay on top of the shifting sands of Quebec government policy, especially regarding schools, and keep saying that Protestantism in Quebec needs to be more urban and more French.

YWAM and Christian Direction have co-operated in projects, including a mis-

sion to New Agers. Alongside astrologers, tarot-readers and flying saucer enthusiasts, they have a booth at a twice-yearly psychic fair in Montreal.

YWAM and Christian Direction have been into arts ministry for some time. Both draw much of their support from Protestant evangelicals, while seeking to broaden their outreach and base to Protestants in general (especially for Christian Direction), Roman Catholics and everyone else.

Their French face is not just an outreach strategy. It's true the 2001 census had English-speakers still in the majority among Quebec's 335,595 Protestants (less than one Quebec resident in 20).



The documentary *Passage* deals with the collaboration between France, a Quebec quadriplegic dancer, and Kuldip, an able-bodied British dancer.



Paintings such as this one by Susan Pepler, as well as the work of Claudia Baltazar and Richard Ouellette, will be exhibited at the Transformation arts festival.

Among them, 191,430 spoke English at home (alone or with another language), 109,345 French and 48,445 another language. But non-anglophone Protestants in Quebec tend to be at the conservative, evangelical end of the spectrum. LeBel says it often feels as if the evangelical community is about equally split among

'Transformation' emphasizes the importance of the arts to spirituality

the three language groups. Christian Direction actually lists 361 individual French-language Protestant congregations in Quebec, compared with 340 English and 274 ethnic.

LeBel hopes Transformation will help church people understand the importance of the arts, make use of art to help non-churchgoers better appreciate Christian spirituality and give some exposure to some committed Christian artists.

Two of the three venues evoke the ethos of French-speaking Montreal. The Salle Gesù, a concert hall that is something of a Québécois icon, will be the site of a screening of the documentary *Passage* by the Montreal filmmaker couple Daniel Shannon and Isabelle Depelteau (he's anglophone, she's fran-

cophone, both are committed Christians). It deals with a collaboration between a Quebec quadriplegic dancer and an able-bodied British dancer. The Salle Gesù is in the basement of the downtown church of the Jesuit Fathers — where, coincidentally, the Jesuits themselves minister to the arts community. The Saturday evening screening will be followed by a concert of new and experimental instrumental music by a local quartet.

Organizers have rented a commercial art gallery in Montreal's trendy Plateau Mont Royal district for an exhibition by three artists. Francophones Claudia Baltazar of Montreal and Richard Ouellette of Quebec City and anglophone Susan Pepler of Montreal are people of Christian commitment, but their works, like the movie, do not have a lot of explicit religious content.

The events with Harbinson will be in the meeting hall of Montreal's Anglican cathedral — a venue that also reflects Montreal's urban reality. The hall is in an office tower next to Christ Church Cathedral, thanks to a deal between Anglicans and real estate developers some years ago.

More information about Transformation is available on the YWAM Montreal website at montreal.jemquebec.ca. **R**

Harvey Shepherd is a Montreal journalist.



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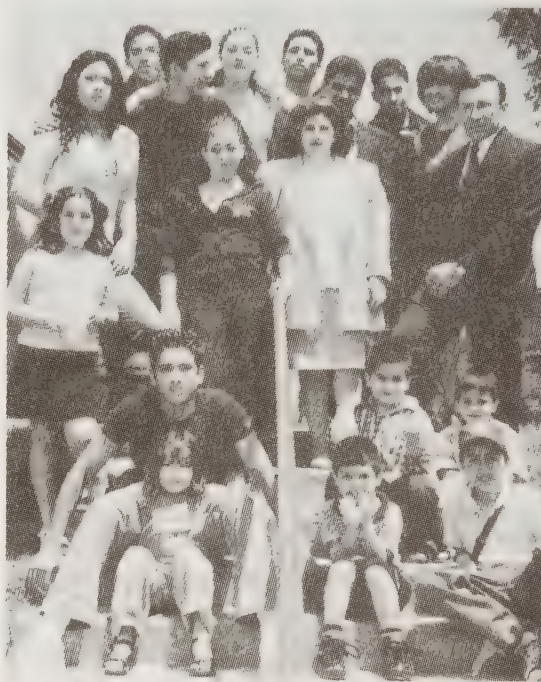
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canadian news

Donations to Presbyterians Sharing remain stable despite increasing costs

Annemarie Klassen, associate secretary for Stewardship and Education for Mission, has announced that gifts to Presbyterians Sharing for 2003 totalled \$8,711,575 — the same as the previous year. This is 0.4 per cent less than the budgeted goal.



The Spanish ministry at North Park Church in Toronto is one of the ministries supported by Presbyterians Sharing.

This is still good news, Ms. Klassen says, especially in a year in which many congregations faced increased insurance costs. "Many congregations work hard to meet their goal, even when their own needs are very pressing," she points out. "This must never be taken for granted. We are grateful to the many, many congregations — large and small — who continue to support the mission and ministry of our church through gifts of money and with prayers."

Ms. Klassen adds that the small shortfall in the budget will not affect programs.

Roberta Clare appointed director of Elders' Institute

St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver School of Theology, has announced that Rev. Dr. Roberta C. Clare has been appointed director of the Elders' Institute for a three-year term.

A graduate of Knox College, Toronto, Dr. Clare also holds a master of sacred theology degree from Union Theological Seminary, New York, and a doctor of education degree from Columbia University Teachers College, New York. In addition to parish work, she has taught at all age levels in culturally diverse contexts and locations. Recently, she coordinated and taught in a national education program given by the United Theological College, Montreal, for lay pastoral ministers with little or no experience in education of religion. Dr. Clare has also served as project manager for the national training program of Church Women United and as a Presbyterian/United Church chaplain at McGill University, Montreal. She has published articles in a number of religious journals and books.



Dr. Clare says her two passions in serving the church are ministry and education. Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, dean of St. Andrew's Hall, believes her two-fold passion will be an "excellent match" for the Elders' Institute, which focuses on educating elders for "faithful, effective and wise ministry and mission."

Hindu extremists attack Christians

by Tom Dickey

On Jan. 22, Rev. Dr. Ron Wallace, associate secretary for International Ministries, received a request for prayer from Pauline Brown, a long-serving Presbyterian missionary working on the Bhil field in India. The victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party, a nationalist Hindu party, in recent state elections has emboldened Hindu extremists in the area. They advocate a policy called *Hindutva* — the belief that India is for Hindus only and that Muslims and, especially, Christians are not true Indians and should not be allowed to live there. At that time, Ms. Brown had heard unconfirmed reports that the church in Alirajpur had been burned and attempts had been made to burn the church in Amkhut. She asked for prayers for the members of these churches and for all Christians undergoing persecution for their faith.

Four days later, on Jan. 26, Ms. Brown was able to confirm by telephone that one church had indeed been burned, in Kathiwara. Several homes belonging to Christians were also torched. (The church in Alirajpur had not suffered the same fate after all, but pews and other furnishings had been vandalized.) Thirteen Christians were in jail, eight of whom — including Rev. Emanuel Ariel, minister of the Amkhut congregation, and Theophilus Stevens, principal of the Amkhut Christian School — were being charged with the murder of a Hindu man killed when Christians in Amkhut tried to defend their church and school from Hindu extremists.

That same day, following his telephone conversation with Ms. Brown, Mr. Wallace wrote a letter to the high commissioner for India to Canada expressing

“the sense of shock and great concern felt by members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada ... because of the outbreak of violent persecution against our Christian brothers and sisters among the Bhil people.” Mr. Wallace pointed to the special relationship Presbyterians in Canada have had with the Bhil people of Vindhya Satpura for more than 100 years. He added a personal note by mentioning he was one of seven Canadian Presbyterians who travelled to India last November to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Chichaniya Church, the first congregation established among the Bhil people. He also mentioned seeing a pamphlet being distributed by Hindu extremists, which included a cartoon of a Christian smashing a statue of the Hindu god Ganesha with a sledgehammer.

Mr. Wallace’s letter expressed thanks to Indian authorities for assigning special police officers to guard the churches, hospital and Christian schools in the area against further violence. He also told the high commissioner that Presbyterians in Canada are aware that the intolerant philosophy of *Hindutva* does not speak for all Hindus.

“What we ask prayerfully and respectfully of the Government of India,” the letter concluded, “is that steps will be taken to prevent extremist groups from both maligning and terrorizing minorities, and that justice will be realized for those whose homes have been burned, and for those innocent persons who have been charged with a murder they did not commit.”

Ms. Brown says she believes some good will eventually come out of the situation. The Bhil Christians are standing strong in their faith and are providing encouragement and support for each other. She also believes authorities will take extremist groups more seriously in the future and will take steps to protect Christians and other minorities. **R**

Making Connections: The Bhil People of India is the church’s study for 2003-2005. A project for children and younger youth — *Partners: Making Bhil Friends in Central India* — uses games, stories, video, music, crafts and festivals to provide an introduction to the Bhil region of India. Money raised in this Learning/Sharing Project will be used in the community health program at Jobat Christian Hospital. The April *Record* will have more on this project.



'Shameful' silence over crimes in Zimbabwe earns politicians a rebuke

HARARE, ZIMBABWE — An alliance of Southern African church leaders has rebuked political leaders in the region over a "shameful" silence on human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. The political leaders have committed themselves to "solidarity with [Zimbabwe's] President Mugabe and his regime" and are "turning a blind eye to the suffering of ordin-

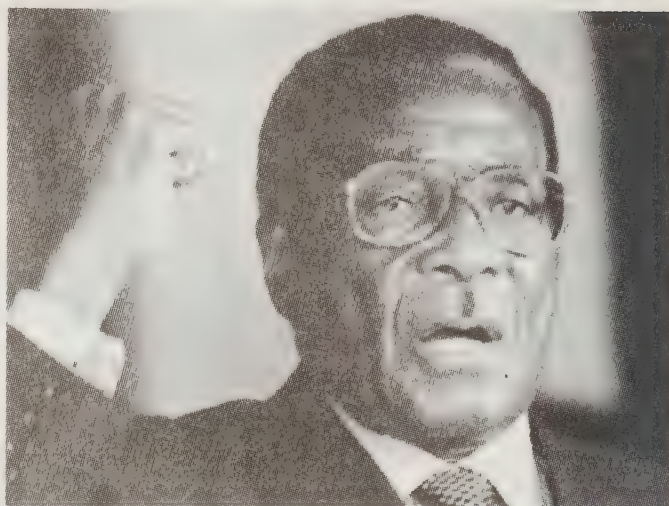
Zimbabwe's government is using smokescreens to hide human rights abuses

ary Zimbabwe citizens," a report issued by the Solidarity Peace Trust charged. The trust is headed by Zimbabwean and South African bishops from the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, including Pius Ncube, the outspoken Catholic archbishop of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city.

In December, South African President Thabo Mbeki and leaders from other Southern African Development Community countries, including Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania, opposed the continued suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth for human rights abuses. Zimbabwe has experienced an upsurge in cases of human rights violations in recent years.

Three years ago, Mr. Mugabe's government embarked on haphazard and sometimes violent land reforms led by supporters of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front party. They allocated themselves commercial farms previously owned by white farmers.

The Solidarity Peace Trust report condemned the Zimbabwe government's "attempts to use as smokescreens, the



President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe

land issue, sovereignty and western imperialism" while committing human rights abuses and violating the charter of the United Nations — a denunciation that was previously made by Desmond Tutu, retired Anglican archbishop and Nobel Prize laureate.

The trust was founded in 2002 and says it aims to build solidarity between South Africa and Zimbabwe and to support churches ministering to human rights victims in Zimbabwe. *ENI*

World leaders call on French president to re-examine religious garb issue

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a letter drafted and coordinated by the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, hundreds of religious leaders, academics, business leaders and other concerned experts have called on President Jacques Chirac of France to reconsider the ban on religious garb in public schools and other public areas.

"We are encouraged to send our concerns to you, Mr. President, out of respect for the unique heritage and traditions of freedom and openness that constituted the pride of France, a country that through history has welcomed diversity and proclaimed tolerance and full respect of the values of human rights," the letter stated. "We agree that fanaticism



President Jacques Chirac of France

and obscurantism threaten the delicate fabric of the contemporary world. But in order to counter it, we need not institute more authoritarian and restrictive dispositions of the law. On the contrary, we should rather embrace more broadmindedness and acceptance, more democracy and freedom."

The letter continued: "A policy of secularism should not be promoted in any way as a cover for unintentional intoler-

ance and atheism as a state policy. To avoid such a twist is as necessary as much as it is to prevent the misuse of the concept of freedom that preoccupies you in the address. It is indeed a fine and fragile balance that needs to be maintained. A noble endeavour that would truly make your nation the proud trustee of its rich history of acceptance and noble ideals.

"Mr. President, there is no valid justification for such a law, especially in the circumstances that prompted the present debate over religious extremism and its tragic consequences throughout the world."

Institute on Religion and Public Policy

Bishop Tutu ordains daughter in Virginia

NEW YORK — Mpho Tutu, daughter of Desmond Tutu, has been ordained as an Episcopal priest with her father's blessing — literally. The former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town ordained his 40-year-old daughter during a Jan. 17 service at Christ Church, an Episcopal (Anglican) parish in Alexandria, Va.

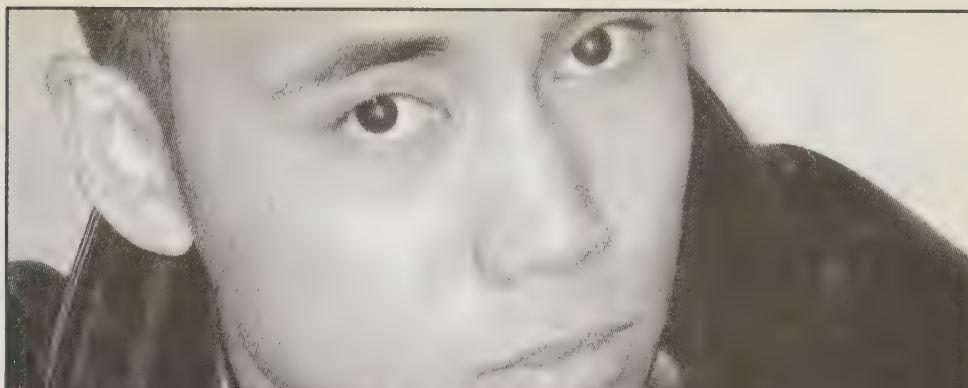
The younger Tutu, who lives in the United States but is not a U.S. citizen, received her theological education at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., and will serve Christ Church for the next two years. She has previously worked assisting women and children who have been victims of domestic violence.

Mpho Tutu was one of four clerics ordained in the service. Her father, who won the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize for his activism against apartheid, was one of four bishops who participated in the rite.


In an interview with the *Washington Post* prior to the ordination, Ms. Tutu said she was initially hesitant to follow in the clerical path set by her father. "I had this laundry list," she said, "of why I didn't want to be a priest. On a list of the top 10 things to do, becoming a priest was about 570," she told the newspaper. But, she added, eventually no other occupation appeared to be as interesting or as meaningful. "It's hard to live with a person who so obviously delighted in what he did and not have something rub off," she said of her father.

Tutu, 72, said he was initially taken aback by her decision. "If you look at my bank balance, she is not so smart," he said. "Her sister said, 'You lived in a priest's house and you want to be a priest? You must be crazy!'" But, noted Tutu, "We're glad she is crazy."

Though a family moment, the ordination occurred on the same weekend the United States held its annual national holiday commemorating the birth of the slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Bishop Tutu acknowledged the anniversary by wearing vestments that included a sewn portrait of King. *ENI*



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Church leaders chastise Malawi's president for demeaning sick vice-president

BLANTYRE, MALAWI — Church leaders and civil and human rights groups have condemned as demeaning and unethical remarks by President Bakili Muluzi that the vice-president, Justin Malewezi, is a sick man because he takes tablets daily.

Malawi Human Rights Commission executive secretary Emiliana Tembo called Mr. Muluzi's remarks a violation of the vice-president's privacy. "He has also violated his freedom of association if the remarks are coming because of the fact that Malewezi has joined the People's Progressive Movement [an opposition group]," Mr. Tembo said.

Mr. Muluzi's attack followed Mr. Malewezi's resignation from the ruling United Democratic Front party at the beginning of the year, when

he relinquished his position as first vice-president of the UDF. Mr. Malewezi, however, retained his position as the country's vice-president. He has said he will leave after his five-year term ends following general elections scheduled for May 18.

Rev. Daniel Gunya, general secretary of the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Malawi's second largest denomination, accused Mr. Muluzi of going too far when he described Mr. Malewezi as *wopepera* (daft) and said that he takes 32 tablets a day because he is a sick man.

"We are very saddened by this development because everybody gets sick," lament-

'There must be respect for each other's life as we are all created in the image of God'

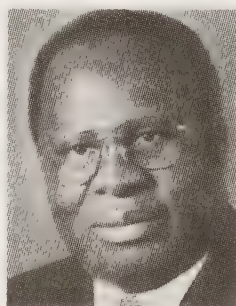
Rev. Daniel Gunya



ed Mr. Gunya. "There must be respect for each other's life as we are all created in the image of God."

The Public Affairs Committee, which represents Christian church organizations, accused the president of not heeding church advice to check his language. Rev. MacDonald Kadawati, the committee's vice-chairman, said, "Muluzi has always promised to take advice from church leaders but in reality the opposite is true."

ENI



President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi

Launch of new U.S. church alliance scheduled for 2005

NEW YORK — A new grouping of U.S. churches that would widen ecumenical dialogue within the United States is expected to be launched in 2005. The new alliance, which is currently being called Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., would be the first formal group to include representatives of Protestant, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Orthodox and predominant African-American denominations.

"Never before in the history of the United States has such a broad and widely representative group come together in this way," said a statement from the Disciples News Service after a meeting of 50 church leaders held in early January in Houston, Texas. Neither the Roman Catholic Church — the single largest denomination in the United States — nor

many Evangelical or Pentecostal bodies belong to the U.S. National Council of Churches, currently the main ecumenical body in the country.

"Present realities in the U.S. leave the churches deeply divided, with no place for Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, historic Protestant, Orthodox and other Christian traditions to come together in fellowship in order to strengthen witness in the world," said Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America and chair of the coalition's steering committee.

The Houston gathering was the fourth such meeting since 2001. Organizers first met amid speculation that such a body might replace the National Council of Churches. However, that does not appear

to be an aim of the new grouping, with potential members saying it will be a streamlined organization with a small staff.

A statement about the group says it aims to provide "a common witness for Christ to the world" and would speak out on shared public concerns, as well as fostering "faithful evangelism" and seeking "reconciliation by affirming our commonalities and understanding our differences."

At least 25 denominations are expected to join the new group, the minimum number that organizers say is required for the new alliance to be launched. Denominations and bodies that have signalled a willingness to form the new coalition are being asked to give their formal approval to the plan over the next 12 months.

ENI

ETHIOPIA

The Presbyterian Church supports aid work in Ethiopia through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, an ecumenical organization owned by 13 denominations. From Nov. 28 – Dec. 10, reporter Amy Sedlezky went on a food study tour with 11 other Canadians in northern Ethiopia to document CFGB's relief work there. Her experiences while travelling more than 2,000 kilometres through the countryside are chronicled here and in the upcoming April issue.



Drought-ravaged country needs community development, not hand-outs

Proud citizens embarrassed by continual food aid

by Amy Sedlezky

The taxi stops at a red light. It's almost midnight and I've just fumbled my way off a flight from Toronto to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. I'm heading to the Ghion hotel and am bleary with sleep. Waiting for the light to change, we're approached by a young woman, her clothes grey and ragged with a dirty cloth draped over her head. She's carrying a baby. Coming right up to the van's window, she peers in at us, not saying a word, gazing with a pained, empty look in her deep brown eyes. The moment is ghostly, as we sit there in the dark, few others on the streets, with this poor woman and her child hoping for some kind of help.



Ethiopia is in trouble. Again. With 65 million people and not enough resources to feed those who are starving, another food security disaster looms on the horizon, waiting impatiently to strike. Relying on food assistance for more than three decades, Ethiopia is tired of its lack of self-sufficiency. A proud people, natives of this ancient land long for the day when their fields will produce abundant harvests and water is no longer scarce.

'It has to stop somewhere. We cannot always rely on food aid. We have to survive on our own. Food assistance only saves lives for the time being. It does not solve the problem'

But food aid is not the only answer. This kind of assistance can create dependence and hamper development. Education and training must be emphasized in order to enable the Ethiopian people to stave off the effects of drought. Belachew Tiksie, local head of the Lutheran World Federation's soil and water conservation project, understands this need. "Drought used to happen every 10 years, then five, then two. Now it's a continuous process," he says. "It's no longer an emergency. We need development assistance so we can become self-sufficient and survive on our own."

Often left with no choice but to receive the help of Western nations, Ethiopia's government has begun to give precedence to the issue of food security, hoping to eliminate the need for international aid that has gone on too long. Since times of serious famine are often when governments fall, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has a vested interest in getting the country back on its feet.

Sam Vander Ende, regional representative in Africa for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, has lived in Ethiopia for 10 years. Working with aid organizations and coordinating the distribution of Canadian grain coming to the country, Mr. Vander Ende is eager to see how the government will solve the problem. He is optimistic about the New Coalition for Food Security Programme in Ethiopia — a strategy committee made up of representatives from non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, the government, donor countries and local executives — commissioned by the government to determine how Ethiopia can become food secure in five years. "The government finally thought, 'Enough is enough,'" says Mr. Vander Ende. "We no longer want to be seen by others as a nation of beggars."

An estimated 14 million people need food assistance in Ethiopia — the highest in the country's history. One of the greater challenges to remedying this lies in the land — so overworked and under-

cared for, it no longer has the capacity to produce. Poor farming practices, overgrazing, drought and an exploding population have left the soil dry, devoid of nutrients and badly eroded.

Critics say part of the problem lies in farmers' disregard for a land that isn't even theirs. A remnant of the communist Derg regime that was run out in 1991, the land remains the property of the government and is leased by those who live on it. The intelligentsia are the most vocal critics, arguing that, if farmers don't own the land, they have no reason to take care of it. The current land-use policies also discourage foreign investors from spending money in Ethiopia, not wanting to leave their land in the hands of the government.

No matter how insurmountable, the difficulties facing Ethiopia don't keep aid organizations from trying to remedy the situation. The Presbyterian Church, although not working directly in Ethiopia, is represented by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, a Christian food aid and development organization. CFGB has supplied Ethiopia with nearly 300,000 tonnes of grain since its inception in 1983. To implement its programs, it enlists the help of local aid organizations.

One of these groups is the Lutheran World Federation, active in Ethiopia for over 17 years and responsible for 135 aid projects. Promoting com-

munity development, cultural education and modern farming practices, LWF does the bulk of its work on water projects, often focusing on river diversion for crop irrigation purposes.

Belachew Tiksie has been involved with LWF for 10 years. A native of the Oromia region of Ethiopia, he is encouraged by the improvements that have been made in several towns. Serving to empower communities with the ability to provide for themselves, water projects have brought about noticeable change.

Several LWF sites in the Wollo region near the town of Weldiya are flourishing. Using a food-for-work method, where area residents build and help implement the project in exchange for CFGB-supplied grain, one small-scale irrigation project will irrigate 160 hectares of land and benefit 620 people. Begun in 2000, the now-completed project cost two million Ethiopian birr (\$309,000) and 700 tonnes of grain in exchange for work.

This project and others like it have several benefits. Most notably, the farmers now grow a variety of crops — from traditional staples like teff and sorghum to cash crops such as fruits and vegetables. Increased harvests can double or triple a farmer's income.

Asa Fough, a farmer who benefits from the project, is grateful for the new water source. Previous

Many farmers rely on teff, Ethiopia's indigenous staple grain, for subsistence. Here, men ready the grain for bagging.





Women shoulder heavy burdens in Ethiopia, often walking 10 to 15 kilometres to fetch firewood and water twice a day.

attempts to use the river were fruitless, he explains, as their own crude diversion attempts were simply washed out during the rainy season. "Before this project, we had only been using rainfall and produced one crop a year. Now we can have three harvests," he said, speaking through an interpreter. "It has a dual purpose. We can have food from the vegetables and potatoes and send some to market, which gives us income."

Because of the introduction of new foods into their diet, the health of farmers and their families has improved. Their standard of living has increased, as has their knowledge of farming and cultural practices, thanks to LWF's commitment to community development. Moges Mengistu, who coordinates LWF's North Ethiopia water diversion

program, realizes the importance of these developments. "We're helping the community in more ways than just water provision. There is social development and community development. This is an important component — it's not only water."

This kind of assistance has spurred the creation of a grassroots organization called Community Organizing Leadership Training for Action (COLTA). A farmer-led group, COLTA trains, educates and organizes the community so it can be self-sufficient. With LWF's help, farmers learn about subjects like economics training for women and promoting a better balance of labour in households, since women traditionally shoulder a much heavier burden than their husbands. Detrimental cultural practices, such as seven- and eight-year-old girls marrying, are also discouraged. Birth control and family planning are also beginning to take hold.

Hawa Mehamede is grateful for such advances. A COLTA member, Mrs. Mehamede says training provided by LWF has precipitated major change in the last five years — especially in the area of family planning. "Before, we had two children within two years. There was no family planning. Now we have two kids within four years," she says. "We have a choice. Birth control is available, either with a pill or injection."

Despite advances, there is still much to be done. Mr. Tiksie doesn't see vast improvements occurring until Ethiopians create their own solutions at a grassroots level. With the country expected to swell to almost twice its current size in the next 15 years, the question of whether or not Ethiopia will be able to support itself is an urgent one. "It has to stop somewhere," says Mr. Tiksie. "We cannot always rely on food aid. We have to survive on our own. Food assistance only saves lives for the time being. It does not solve the problem." A major factor in this problem, according to Mr. Tiksie, is that the government has been slow to act. "It could have taken action years ago when the population wasn't as high and resources were still good. We're expecting more than 100 million people by 2020. What will happen then?"

Another serious concern is the lack of trees found on the landscape. In the 1960s, 40 per cent of Ethiopia's landscape was covered with trees — a feature that protects soil from being blown away by strong dry season, or *jillal*, winds. Today, that number is less than two per cent. Consequently, tree planting has become an important part of aid in some areas of the country. In other districts, nothing but time will heal the land.

In the Afar region, a lowland area encompassing 270,000 square kilometres, a harsh desert climate

(continued on page 28)

Education paramount for progress

Food aid is only a temporary saviour from starvation. Other approaches are needed to pull Ethiopia out of its deep hole, and Moges Mengistu is firm about where to start. "Farmers should be educated," says the coordinator for a Lutheran World Federation water diversion program. "And they should educate their children so they can leave the farm and get a job in town."

Moving people from the country to the city is a transition Mr. Mengistu hopes will come soon, but he realizes the shift will be difficult without strong government support. Ethiopia's current prime minister, Meles Zenawi, appears to be committed to solving the country's food security problems, but keeping people on the land is easier since finding a job in the city is challenging with little education.

When migrants can't find jobs, they become part of the overcrowded ghettos of the poor and hungry. Such destitute situations are found on Entoto Road in Addis Ababa, where tin-roofed shacks sealed with dung and mud line the streets, farm animals loiter in front yards and residents hike miles up the mountain road searching for fire-



Ethiopia has the world's lowest primary education enrolment rate. Food programs are often offered as an incentive for parents to send their children to school.

wood and clean water. These informal settlements — slums, really — are home for 85 per cent of Addis Ababa's population, and 60 per cent live below subsistence levels.

Widespread poverty remains a barrier to education. In a country where 80 per cent of its people are farmers, many families can't afford to send their children to school, even though some elementary schools cost only one to two birr (at the time, a birr was worth about 15 cents) per month. In addition, children's help is needed on the farm, making education a low priority.

Even if a person gets a high school diploma, good jobs in the city are hard to come by, partly due to a lack of foreign investors who could create more business opportunities. As a result, many Ethiopians have no choice but to leave for greener pastures.

Belachew Tiksie is one of the few to return. After pursuing a degree in Yugoslavia, he returned to Ethiopia and is working as the Lutheran World Federation's soil and water conservation project coordinator. "I love my country," he says. "Whether poor or rich, it is my home."

Despite numerous challenges, Ethiopians remain hopeful. Universities and education centres are growing — many towns now boast business, computer and management schools. More people are earning university degrees than ever before. Six or

seven years ago, 6,000 people in Ethiopia had a degree; today, there are 15,000.

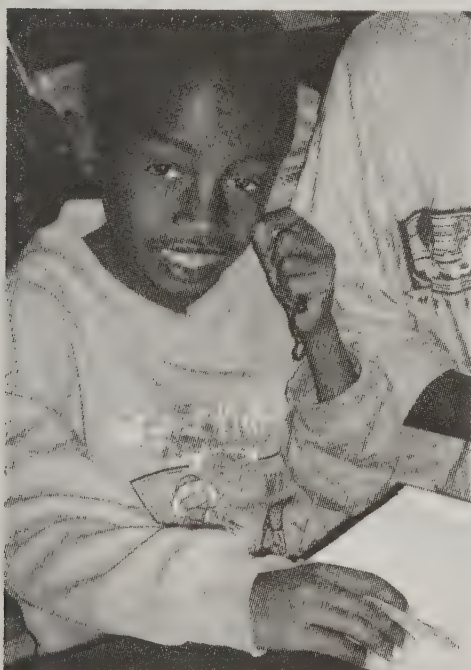
The key to education — at least in rural areas — is making it relevant to the environment, enabling farmers to incorporate more effective farming practices into their traditional methods. "If people are educated, they think about development," said Mr. Mengistu. "This is not simply theoretical. That is where the government should be working — to make education practical so you can work your land and have money to feed yourself."

Because development is so important, especially with an exploding population, resources must be maximized. "We have to apply, as much as possible, scientific methodology, because we have been using backward practices for many years," says Mr. Mengistu.


Convincing farmers to abandon traditional methods is not easy, but Yohannes Belihu is giving it a try. As a coordinator with Food for the Hungry International, Mr. Belihu believes helping farmers update their practices is an important goal. "They're not risk-takers," he says. "That is the reason why change is not coming soon."

Still, aid workers hope things will improve as more people go to school. "Whatever you need," says Mr. Mengistu, "it is impossible to develop it without education." **R**

— Amy Sedlezky



Twelve teachers educate 800 students at this school near Weldiya, about 500 km north of Addis Ababa. This boy sits in English class — for which there are only three textbooks.



'We were here at the start of the harvest, going around the fields, talking to the farmers, looking at the crops — they were desperate. You find farmers standing there, in the middle of the field, looking very, very sad. It's a desperate situation'



Children are often curious about tourists. In Debra Berhan, they are more than willing to pose for pictures, hoping for candy or money.

In Lalibela, a man weaves the snow-white shawls worn by Christian women and men alike. Muslim women wear brightly coloured shawls and scarves.



There are 300,000 Orthodox priests in Ethiopia, and each church has its own uniquely shaped cross, designed to disguise Christian adherence during the 13th-century Muslim-Christian wars.



A traditional grass hut in the northern highlands. The walls are made of wood and are insulated with a mixture of mud, straw and animal dung.

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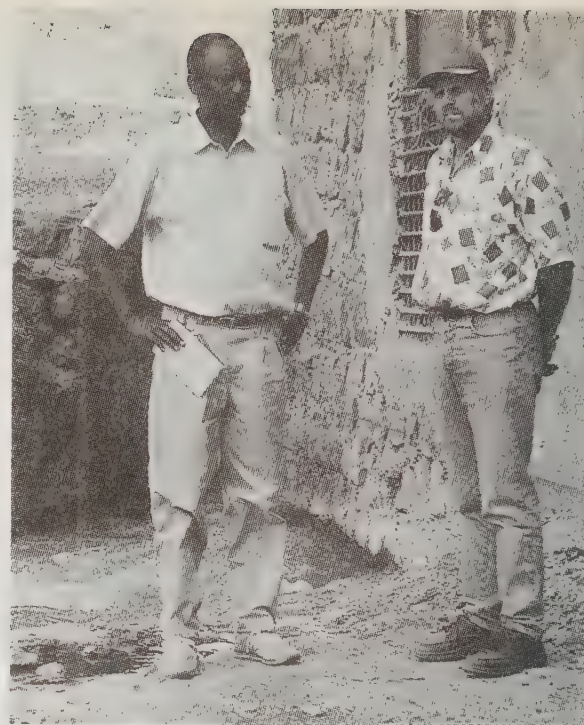
allows for little of anything to grow. The land is so devoid of nutrients it needs to rest and replenish itself. LWF isn't discouraged by the difficult climate in the Afar; a greater challenge is the people — pastoral nomads who are constantly on the move in search of food and water for their animals. This age-old lifestyle makes motivating them to come every day — walking for miles — to build the water diversion project difficult.

In the Afar town of Mille, 520 km northeast of the capital, construction on the river diversion project began in 1999 and is yet to be finished. Four years and 1,000 tonnes of CFGB grain later, Mr. Tiksie hopes it will be finished in June 2004. When complete, the water will irrigate 150 to 200 hectares of land and benefit 600 families.

The frustration of the Mille project is tempered by other successes. Nestled in Ethiopia's northern highlands in the town of Nefas Mewlcha and the larger South Gonder region, Food for the Hungry International has been working for 17 years. Its newest project, South Gonder Triple Year Employment Generation Scheme, began in 2003 and will continue into 2005. Funded by 3,000 tonnes of CFGB grain, 42,000 people in the three districts (*woredas*) of Laygayint, Tachgayint and Simada will benefit from FHI's efforts.

Comprised of evangelical Christians — a rarity in the Orthodox- and Muslim-dominated country — the local FHI staff envision the fledgling com-

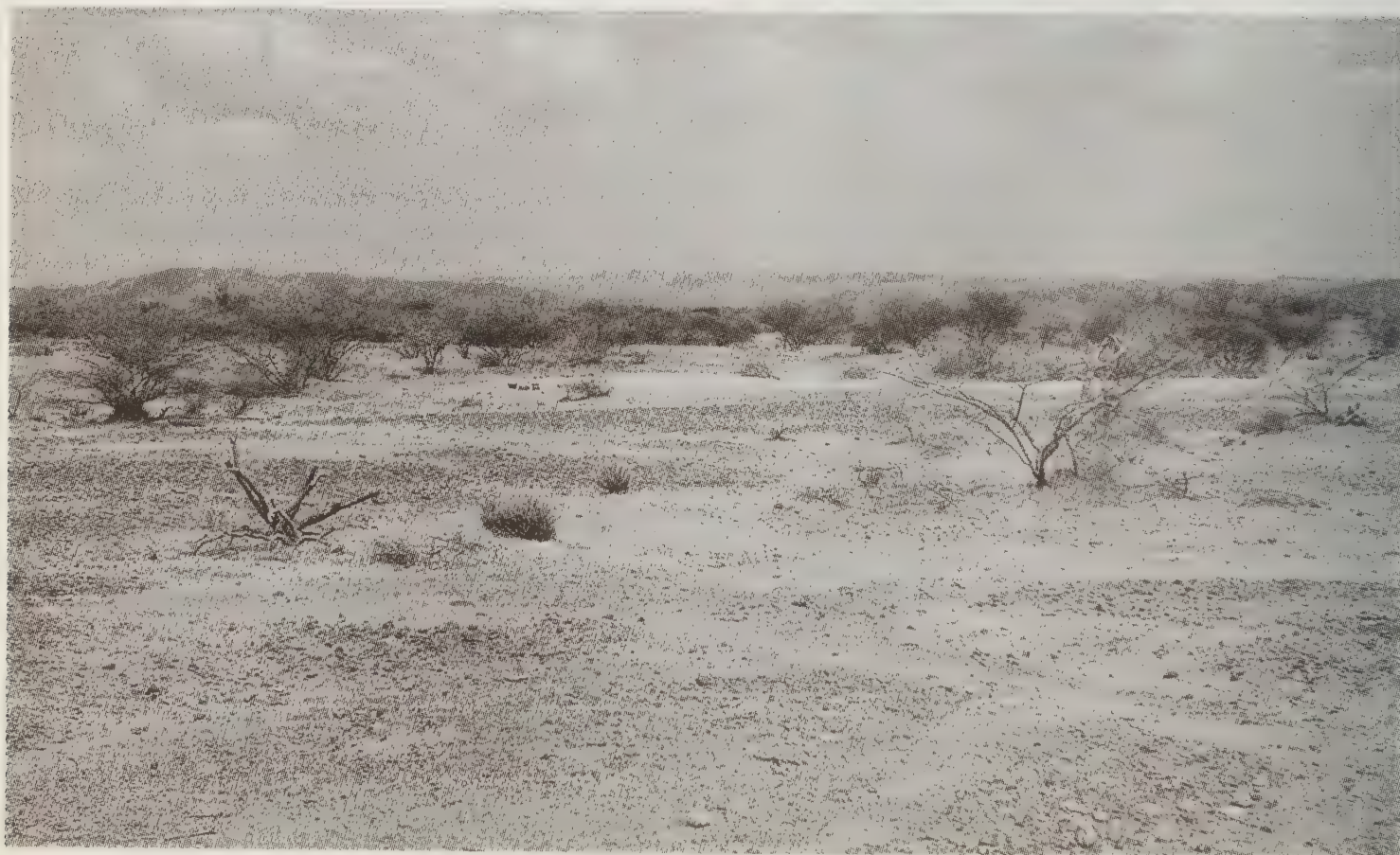
The Afar region is home to over one million people — mostly Muslim nomads — and is characterized by desert lands punctuated by occasional drought-resistant acacia trees.



Belachew Tiksie (left), project coordinator with LWF, and Sam Vander Ende, CFGB representative in Africa, stand beside a water diversion project in Mille.

munities as advancing toward their God-given potential. The three-year program has four main goals: creating employment through food-for-work projects, facilitating community development and infrastructure, filling the food gap that regularly plagues the area, and improving nutrition. Not only

(continued on page 30)



Faith comes first in Ethiopia

But devotion hinders development

Priding themselves on an ancient past and ties to the earliest days of Christianity, Ethiopians consider religion an integral part of daily life — an existence that is, in many ways, characterized by suffering, distress and going without. "There's a severity to Ethiopian culture," says Sam Vander Ende, who represents the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in Africa. "It's harsh, but poverty is harsh."

The majority of Christians in Ethiopia — which, depending on the source, varies from 35 to 50 per cent of the population — are Orthodox. The Orthodox Church has its own divisions: the Ethiopian Church is one of the Oriental Orthodox churches that split from the Eastern Orthodox (Greek and, later, Russian churches) in 451. Ethiopian Ortho-

Life has a different value in Ethiopia. People are not in control. It is a culture of fatalism. They think, 'We were cast into this miserable life and we will die in this miserable life'

dox believers adhere to many of the laws and codes found in the Old Testament. They also have innumerable holy days — which they count as holidays from work — to commemorate the saints they hold dear.

Mahaley Timket is a 26-year-old Ethiopian native of Addis Ababa who works as a tour guide. His last name means "epiphany" — a reflection of the Orthodox importance of that feast. Although faith is not as important for younger urban dwellers as for those in rural areas, religion still influences Mr. Timket's life. "In our area, they are so fanatic about their religion," he says. "Even when they go to work, they say, 'God, please help me on this day.' Everybody does this." In areas without a specific church building, Mr. Timket explains, people gather outside for makeshift services.

The problem is that Ethiopians' devotion to God and the saints often interrupts their



Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa contains Emperor Haile Selassie's tomb. The church was built for Selassie's wife, Menen Asfaw, who is also buried here along with their children.

working lives. Currently, 13 to 15 days a month are holidays celebrating a wide variety of saints and, on these days, Orthodox Christians don't work — not even during harvest. Even in the Muslim town of Kombolcha, northeast of Addis Ababa, a group of Orthodox women walks the streets on St. Mary's Day (the Feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, a celebration commemorating the apocryphal story of Mary's mother, Anne, when she presented her newborn daughter in the temple). The women carry holy water and icons of Mary. They chant, preach and urge people to follow. During this holiday, several days of rain fell and, because harvesting was postponed, crops were damaged, spelling disaster for farmers.

This refusal to work on saints days is one of the barriers to improving the country's economic situation. The government is currently investigating ways to require citizens to work a minimum of 270 days per year, but enforcing this may be problematic in a country so committed to faith.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Bible has 18

books. It includes the books of the Apocrypha as well as other writings found only in the Ethiopian canon. The beliefs, legends, myths and other stories passed on in these writings, along with other religious texts, are central to the way followers live their lives. They root their faith in 3,000-year-old stories. For example, the Queen of Sheba had a tryst with King Solomon and, as the story goes, bore the child Menelik, who began the powerful Ethiopian dynasties of the ancient world and is believed to have brought the Ark of the Covenant to that country. Then, there is the 12th-century tale of King Lalibela (swarmed by bees upon his birth signalling his sovereignty), who received direct instructions from God to build a New Jerusalem in Ethiopia. The legends continued with the late Emperor Haile Selassie, who ruled from 1930 to 1974 and claimed to be the 225th king in the line of Judah, linking him to Sheba and Solomon.

Although Orthodoxy helped people cope with life's difficulties in the past, it seems to be holding them back as they

(continued on page 31)



A woman receives her final payment for work done on a ZOA cash-for-work relief project. Forty-nine percent of Ethiopians are malnourished.

(continued from page 28)

is the area crippled by drought, the communities suffer from land degradation, poor health, a high illiteracy rate, farmland shortage, no off-farm employment and little clean water (a luxury that only 30 per cent of the rural community enjoys).

The small village of Zenebo is the site of an FHI gully treatment, designed to build up the land and protect it from future erosion. Benefiting 1,000 households, the project used 75 tonnes of CFGB grain. Residents work five days a month for five months — as farmers also need time to work their own land — and receive three kilograms of grain per day.

Abebaw Gobeze, secretary of the community's farmers association, recognizes the benefits of the project. Speaking through an interpreter, Mr. Gobeze said his ancestors were able to let the land lie fallow, giving fields time to rejuvenate. But this is no longer a possibility with the growing population. Overuse has led to erosion and decreased production. Allowing cattle to graze freely is also detrimental. The land was abused, says Mr. Gobeze,

but lessons have now been learned and changes are being made.

One of the main problems in South Gonder is overpopulation. The government is promoting a voluntary resettlement option, where residents can move to less populated areas with some financial help. Under this plan, the household head would go to the new location, survey it, build a home, plant crops and then bring his family to join him. Each family that relocates would be granted two hectares of land — a step up from the current situation where they're lucky to have an eighth of a hectare. But farmers may refuse to go at all, uneasy about the risk of malaria (a rare disease in the highlands of South Gonder), hot temperatures, cultural differences and reluctant to leave a place where their ancestors have lived for centuries. So far, the idea has been slow to catch on.

Relocating is nothing new for the people living in the Werebabo district of South Wollo, where ZOA Refugee Care has been working to feed the people. ZOA is a Dutch acronym for Southeast Asia, where they first began their work nearly 40 years ago with Vietnamese refugees. Not exactly refugees, the people in Werebabo left Ethiopia years ago to escape drought and famine. They crossed the mountains in the east to Djibouti, but were deported by that country's government. Given only one month to get out, they left with no belongings, little money and no home to go to. They returned to Ethiopia and created their own settlements — displaced people living amid the mountains, secluded from others and trying desperately to survive.

There are three townships, or *kebeles*, ZOA is working with. A road was constructed during their current five-month program, linking the three villages to the main road and making it easier to receive assistance. With compensation given on a cash-for-work basis, wages are determined by the



FHI staff and CFGB tour group members pose beside bags of Canadian wheat waiting to be distributed for FHI's relief work in South Gonder.

market value of 12.5 kg of wheat, multiplied by the number of people in a family. The project ended in December 2003 even though the circumstances hadn't improved.

Because of the grim situation, the government is also urging these people to relocate to a less populated area. Dechasa Gurmu, ZOA's project manager for the Dessie and Weldiya areas, realizes a new solution is needed where perpetual drought keeps residents dependent on assistance. "What the government is trying to do now is move some of these people to a better place because the population is increasing and resources are decreasing. Every year it is a problem," he says. "And unless assistance comes from the outside, they cannot manage." But the people in this *kebele* don't want to move. Forced from their homes too many times already, they are determined to weather the hardships and make the most of the little they have. During a farmers panel discussion, sorrowful gazes and despondent voices make clear the frustration they feel over not being able to provide for themselves. One farmer raises his voice and, speaking through an interpreter, says he is sick of moving and will stay where he is no matter what happens. His desire to be self-sufficient is clear. "We are not beggars," he stresses. "We don't like to beg. We like to be working by ourselves."

There are 20,000 people living in the three *kebeles* in the area; 12,000 are receiving assistance.

Rain has been scarce for the past three years and insufficient for growing plentiful crops in a hot climate. With no grazing land, cattle — comparable to a bank account — are dying. This loss is devastating for a people who rely on cattle for milk, meat and to plough the fields.

Seife Lemma, responsible for ZOA cash distribution in the area, recognizes it is extremely difficult to live under such conditions. "Crop production in this area is very poor," he says. "Even if the crop is

'Every time the government asks for assistance, we feel ashamed as individuals. But now, because of the situation, we're forced. It was not like that in the past. We need some resolve to get out of this cycle'

promising, it is attacked by insects and it is short of rain. Even if rain comes, it is untimely sometimes." Rain can be unwanted during harvest time as it makes the crop too wet to cut or causes it to resprout, affecting the quality of the grain. A damaged crop may not even be palatable as fodder for livestock. Because the yield is poor, farmers are running out of seeds to plant next season. "It is the time to say, 'harvest,'" says Mr. Lemma, "but there is no harvest here."

Mr. Gurmu is equally despondent. "We were here at the start of the harvest, going around the

(continued from page 29)

step into the future. Dire situations are often thought to be out of one's hands. "Life has a different value in Ethiopia," says Mr. Vander Ende. "People are not in control. It's a culture of fatalism. They think, 'We were cast into this miserable life and we will die in this miserable life.'"

Deeply entrenched, age-old ideas serve as barriers to progress. Poor farmers are often skeptical of new methods because they can't afford to have them fail. Yohannes Belihu is an evangelical Christian and a program coordinator for Food for the Hungry International. He believes evangelical farmers (approximately 30 to 40 of the 42,000 people in the townships Mr. Belihu assists) are more willing to take risks than Orthodox believers. "They may use prayer before trying and, if they feel it's God's will, they may take that risk. This is only my opinion," adds Mr. Belihu, "but they've already broken traditional ties by converting to [evangelical] Christianity. They can be outcast from the community for that. They already took



Orthodox women walk in Kombolcha on St. Mary's Day. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians celebrate about 150 religious festivals each year.

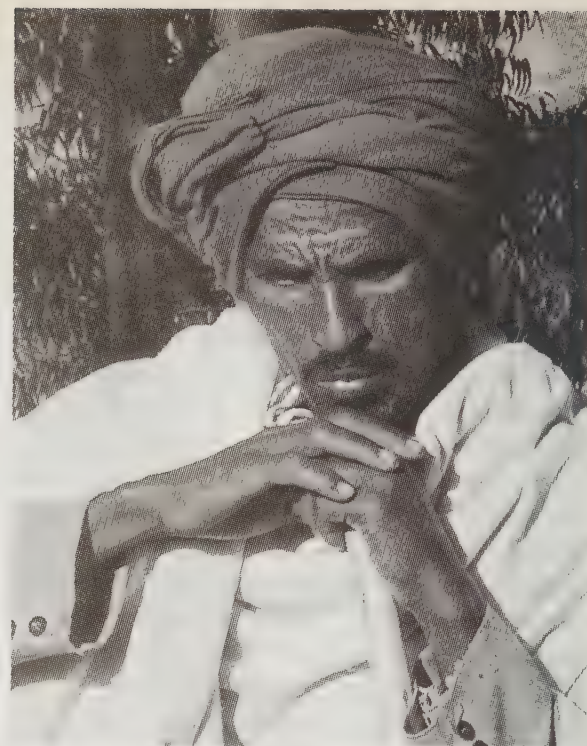
a big risk. So they may pray and then be ready to change."

It is estimated that 10 to 15 per cent of Ethiopians are evangelical Christians. Missionaries who came during the time of Haile Selassie were given permission to spread the gospel in the southern part of the country where people weren't Christian.

At times it seems Orthodox and Evangelical Christians aren't even talking about the same faith; but, when personal preferences are set aside, the denominations share several common traits. Regardless of faith, they are kind, generous and pious. Farmers who have so little are willing to give all they have to visitors, welcoming passersby into their homes and managing to stay hopeful in the midst of poverty and hardship. "It's very difficult to say something positive because we have been marginalized for years," says Moges Mengistu, a program coordinator with the Lutheran World Federation. "But I'm sure of one thing: God can help us. Nothing is impossible with God." **R**

—Amy Sedlezky

QUICK FACTS



Ethiopia suffers from severe soil erosion, with estimates that 1.5 billion to 2 billion tonnes of top soil are lost each year. This farmer stands by an FHI soil conservation project — part of that organization's community development program.

fields, talking to the farmers, looking at the crops — they were desperate. You find farmers standing there, in the middle of the field, looking very, very sad," he says. "It's a desperate situation."

As ZOA's commitment of assistance was drawing to a close in December, many farmers were asking Mr. Gurmu what will happen in the days ahead. ZOA's agreement with the government was only for five months, so it cannot continue aid until a new arrangement is made. So far, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission — a government assessment team that helps prevent and respond to emergencies — has visited the camp to gather data. Farmers were anxiously awaiting the verdict when we were there.

An Ethiopian native, Mr. Gurmu is saddened by the dismal situation for many in the country. "We would like very much to depend on ourselves, for Ethiopians to manage to lead their lives and be self-supporting," he says. "To beg for food is the lowest thing you can do in our culture. Every time the government asks for assistance, we feel ashamed as individuals. But now, because of the situation, we're forced. It was not like that in the past. We need some resolve to get out of this cycle."

Perhaps the most important aspect of bringing about change is maintaining optimism that things will get better — an idea that CFGB clings to. "CFGB doesn't solve the problem," says Mr. Vander Ende. "What it does do, through its partners, is give hope." **R**

Ethiopia

Location:	Eastern Africa
Border countries:	Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya
Area:	1,127,127 sq km
Population:	67 million
Age structure in years:	
0-14:	44.8%
15-64:	52.4%
65 and over:	2.8%
Median age in years:	17.3
Birth rate per 1,000 population:	39.8
Death rate per 1,000 population:	20.2
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births:	103.2
Fertility rate (children born per woman):	5.6
Life expectancy in years:	41.2
HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate (2001):	6.4%
People living with HIV/AIDS:	2.1 million
Religions:	Muslim 45%-50%, Ethiopian Orthodox 35%-40%, animist 12%, other 3%-8%
Literacy rate:	42.7%
Internet users:	20,000
Main industry:	agriculture — 50% of GDP, 85% of exports and 80% of total employment

Canada

Location:	Northern North America
Border countries:	Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans, United States
Area:	9,984,670 sq km
Population:	32 million
Age structure in years:	
0-14:	18.5%
15-64:	68.6%
65 and over:	12.9%
Median age in years:	37.8
Birth rate per 1,000 population:	11
Death rate per 1,000 population:	7.6
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births:	4.9
Fertility rate (children born per woman):	1.6
Life expectancy in years:	79.8
HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate (2001):	0.3%
People living with HIV/AIDS:	55,000
Religions:	Roman Catholic 43%, other Christians 29%, no religion 16%, other 12%
Literacy rate:	97%
Internet users:	16.84 million
Main industry:	services 71.2% of GDP, manufacturing/industry 26.5% of GDP

Source: The World Fact Book 2003 (CIA)

pastoral epistles from peter plymley II

Dear Editor:

Great consternation (think persistent anxiety on steroids) descended on our presbytery as we broke open a fresh package of Lent. The normally sedate atmosphere of cheerily patient resignation, laced like ripple ice cream with streaks of mightily squeezed enthusiasm for the “exciting challenges” before us, has been dissipated, and presbytery doesn’t do dissipation very well. Several congregations had undergone annual meetings whose general tone made the book of Lamentations read like a script for a Busby Berkeley musical. (There is probably not a publication left in North America wherein a columnist could make an unelaborated reference to Busby Berkeley and expect at least half a dozen readers to understand! — but I digress. I hope that reference to the book of Lamentations needs no elaboration — but I digress further.)

Nor was the pain localized. In ancient downtown church halls, festooned with framed pictures of bearded pulpiteers from the past, and on the hardwood floors of suburbia under cobwebbed basketball nets and bulletin boards bearing evidence of 78 ways to volunteer, the vital signs were dipping faster than attendance figures for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity services on Super Bowl Sundays.

All was not doom and gloom of course. Probably every presbytery has an ailing family member for whom we welcome the chance to express compassion, but the body of Christ (Presbyterian model) here was facing the very real prospect of several amputations, and on a scale unprecedented since the black year of 1925. (Can I assume *that* reference? Oh, never mind.)

Our first thought was, of course, “What would Wynford Drive do?” (Has our national office considered marketing WWDD bracelets and pendants?) Many of us were old enough to remember The National Development Fund and The Second Century (ours not the universal church’s) Advance for Christ, but they all involved money, which, being absent

in our case, was part of the problem.

We recalled the effort at Church Growth to Double in the Eighties and had to explain to some of the younger members that, no, it wasn’t the 1880s when we did quite well but the 1980s when we met with less success but kept from declining by half. The trip down memory lane held other pit stops, but it was our most recent effort, the FLAMES Initiative, that was freshest in our minds. If our national church could assist us in burning through 2000 years of Christian thought in six years — 0.3 per cent of the time it took our ancestors in the faith — then could we not employ a combination

Our first thought was WWDD — what would Wynford Drive do?

think-tank and survey to do the same in our small corner? Some of our little candle congregations had been out for some time and others were burnt down to a few millimetres of wick and guttering, but surely we could go boldly where countless others had gone before.

YES! We decided to devote an *entire* presbytery meeting to addressing the problem ... well, not quite an entire meeting. The Special Committee on Reorganization of Committees could not be put off, and plans for our annual Togetherness Treat! (the June picnic at Lake Wannabegone) had hit a snag because some presbyters were demanding a study on our campsite’s effect on the biodiversity of the area, but other than that ...

The worship portion of the evening had been speeded up by the omission of one hymn, and we broke up into groups to scatter about the host church, equipped with newsprint pads, markers and lots of people who didn’t want the job of taking notes and reporting back. Herewith are a few reported comments/questions/conclusions:

- Our group spent a long time discussing worship music and the need to

“liven it up for the youth.” One person thought Lawrence Welk must have had something going for him since he was still on TV though he had been dead for years. Another replied, “U2!” It took us most of the time to explain that it wasn’t an insulting challenge but a rock group from Ireland. We concluded there were many tastes.

- Someone thought the energies of the church were being diverted by “the gay people issue.” We were pretty evenly divided on the subject since one-third wondered how we would replace so many useful workers, one-third saw the SARS outbreak and

the B.C. forest fires as God’s judgment on us, and the remaining third thought the church needed as many cheery people as it could get in these times. We agreed to disagree — most of us anyway.

- We were not properly informed whether there was to be a coffee break tonight and, by the time we found out, there was.
- It was thought we had too many churches, that Presbyterian was too hard to spell and that we needed a better logo, perhaps a distinctive one for each congregation. We could have a contest. The congregations with the best logos would have the right to remain open or to have first dibs on congregations due to close.

That’s but a sampling, dear Editor, but I have run out of space.

Hoping that we are not running out of time, I remain yours,



people & places

December 28 was a special day at Bethel Church, Scotsburn, N.S. Rev. Sandy McDonald, Moderator of the 129th General Assembly, conducted the worship service and baptized the infant triplets of Bethel's minister, Rev. Lara Scholey, and her husband, Dr. Carl Adams. Pictured are elder Allan Fraser, Dr. Adams, Rev. Lara Scholey and the Moderator, holding Matthew Edward, Charlotte Grace and Isaac Lyndon.



Living Faith Community Church welcomed former moderator Rev. Mark Lewis as guest speaker on Presbyterians Sharing Sunday, Nov. 23. Living Faith is the newly formed congregation created by the amalgamation of Cookstown and Baxter churches in Ontario. Pictured standing are: (L-R) clerk of session Bryce Hawkins, Presbyterians Sharing treasurer Anita Marie Hawkins, Rev. Mark Lewis and Kevin Nemeth, new building project coordinator. In the front are Lindsay and Daniel Nemeth.



The Grade 4-5 church school class at St. Andrew's, Fredericton, held a mitten-tree project, collecting about 70 hats, scarves and pairs of mittens for donation to local families.



Margaret Warner, a member of Knox, Bobcaygeon, Ont., cuts a cake celebrating her 95th birthday.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Unfortunately, we cannot return any photographs. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

Clerk of session Lyall MacLachlan, Rev. Ian MacMillan and Clark McCuaig, chair of the building committee, look on as Emily MacMillan holds the ceremonial shovel at the groundbreaking ceremony for a new Christian education centre for St. Andrew's, South Lancaster, Ont. The centre will include a nursery/toddler room, a library, a classroom and a multi-purpose room.



Jan Sheridan is shown with two of the children who attend the Kumon learning program at Parkwood Church, Ottawa. While waiting for their parents to pick them up, the children enjoy crafts, such as the black angels they sold to raise money for AIDS orphans in Uganda.



Rev. Gary Morton (left) was the guest speaker at a service commemorating the 150th anniversary of St. Peter's, Madoc, Ont. With him is the minister of St. Peter's, Rev. Stephen Thompson.

The congregation of St. Andrew's, Owen Sound, Ont., performed a dramatic reading of the classic *It's a Wonderful Life* last November. The featured reader was well-known folk artist Valdy as the lead character, George Bailey. Valdy is flanked by two of the other readers, Gavin Wade (left) and Ed Renaud.



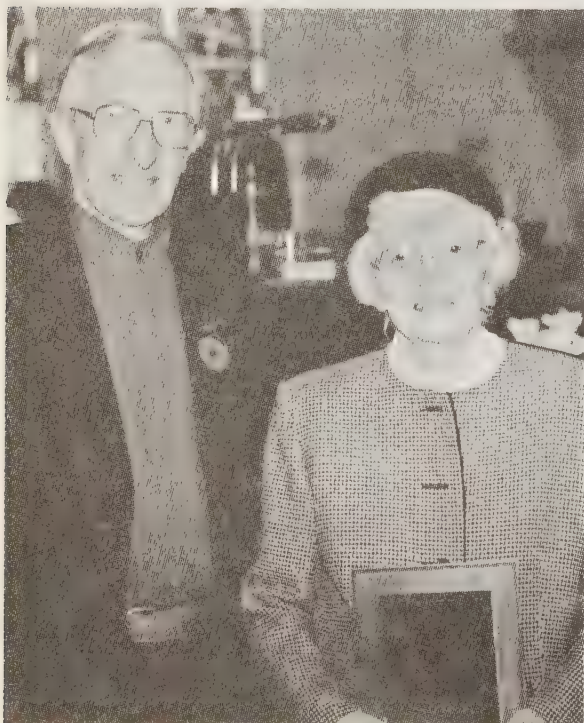
The craft group of St. Timothy's, Ottawa, and their homemade bonnets were among the stars of an Old Tyme Talent Show held at the church. In the front are: (L-R) Ruth Toller, Ruth Reiser, Helen Taylor and Mary Ballantyne. In the back are: Ina Higgs, Sheila Whyte, Betty West, Helen Taylor, Charlotte Craig, Terry Fitos and Margaret MacIntyre.



A farewell reception was held for Rev. Ronald Sharpe, minister of St. Andrew's, Welland, Ont., for more than six years, and for Judy Hunt, church secretary for 14 years. Gifts of money were presented to each, and a bouquet of red roses was presented to Ronald Sharpe's wife, Kirsty. Pictured are: (L-R) Kirsty Sharpe, Judy Hunt, Ike Hunt, Rev. Ron Sharpe and, in the front, Nathan and Benjamin Sharpe.



To celebrate the 125th anniversary of Mt. Pleasant Church, Mt. Pleasant, Ont., a Kirkin' o' the Tartan service was organized by June Adam. Behind her are Grace Allen, Norma Redditt and Georgina Walsh, who quilted a wall-hanging of the church, which was dedicated during the service.

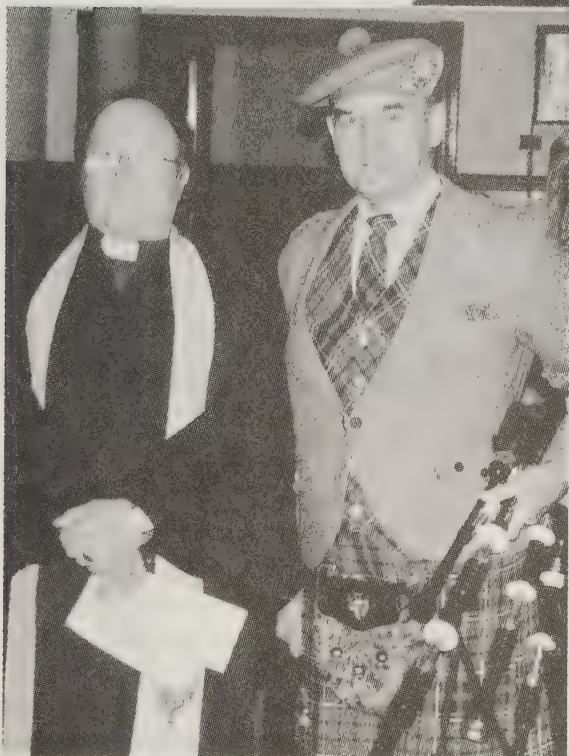


Edna Bannerman of Jubilee Church, Stayner, Ont., was presented with a plaque in recognition of her 70 years as a faithful member. Making the presentation was clerk of session Don McNabb.

A new sign for St. Andrew's-Knox Church, Fort Erie, Ont., was dedicated in January on the 36th anniversary of the amalgamation of the St. Andrew's and Knox congregations. The sign was dedicated in memory of elder Alf Gorham, a contractor who rebuilt the church building after a disastrous fire in 1973. Standing by the sign are: Rev. Cameron Bigelow; Rick Gorham, son of the late Alf Gorham; Carole Nelson, clerk of session; and Hank Froese, elder and supervisor of the sign project, who designed it to match the five sets of roof timbers in the open-ceiling sanctuary.



Rev. Ted O'Neil, acting minister of St. Paul's, Winchester, Ont., and piper John Yourt led a special service to commemorate St. Andrew's Day on Nov. 28.



A reception was held at Knox, Ottawa, to honour Margaret Kennett for more than 60 years of dedicated service. Margaret was the first woman elder at Knox and the only woman to serve as clerk of session. Elder Marlene duCharme (left) presented Margaret with a memory book on behalf of the congregation.

Mark and Brian Weatherall were two of the 23 children who attended a Christian workshop at St. Andrew's, Stirling, Ont., on a PA Day last November. Through songs, raps, skits, crafts and games, LeRoy the Lobster talked to the children about the importance of having God in their lives.



A loyal presbytery that has a delightful blend

The Presbytery of Central Alberta

by Tom Dickey

Central Alberta communities have all the amenities of larger urban centres without the traffic congestion and the higher cost of living.

Do a search for Central Alberta on the Internet and you can find that promotional statement, and many more. Undoubtedly, it's true of the Presbytery of Central Alberta — especially the part about traffic congestion. The presbytery is predominantly rural in makeup, with most congregations in small towns or farming communities. The largest community, Red Deer, has a population of about 68,000 (and a location and lifestyle many larger cities would envy). The rest have population figures of the four-digit variety: several range between 6,000 and 7,000, perhaps a sign of a low-key, down-to-earth stability to the region.

Not surprisingly, life has not always been stable within the presbytery. Along the way, a few churches have been faced by that sad and familiar equation: an aging congregation minus few new members equals closed doors. The most recent victim, Chalmers Church, marked 100 years of ministry in the Penhold area on Oct. 19, 2003. Now, its congregation will be worshipping at St. Andrew's in Red Deer. Other churches will be facing similar decisions, and the presbytery will continue to try to deal with all situations in a kind and compassionate way.

But there is also a certain resiliency to the presbytery. In an article in the October 1963 *Presbyterian Record*, with the straightforward title *A Story of Success*, Stanley Reid described the Presbytery of Red Deer (the presbytery's name until 1993) as being "composed chiefly of small towns and rural congregations." Sounds familiar, doesn't it. Forty years later, the *Record* is still describing the presbytery that way.



A massed choir practises at Knox Church, Red Deer, for the annual Palm Sunday event that has been a tradition in the Presbytery of Central Alberta for over 40 years.

The presbytery's roots may have something to do with it. Congregations are closely knit and fiercely loyal to their denomination's traditions. Presbyterianism first appeared in the region in the early 1880s, when "saddlebag preachers"

The presbytery is full of people who have a heart for the Lord and want to see his kingdom grow

and ministers such as Rev. A.B. Baird of Edmonton held open-air services at the Red Deer River crossing, a fording place for wagon trains travelling between Calgary and Edmonton. Rev. W.G. Brown of Red Deer and Rev. W.G. McKechnie, who was blind but travelled accompanied through small towns in Central Alberta, were two of the strong early influences in rural Alberta.

St. Andrew's, Innisfail, was erected in 1892. St. Andrew's, Olds, came into existence a year later. The original Knox Church in Red Deer was built in 1898. Other congregations followed shortly. The first Zion Church, in Willowdale, was constructed about 1905 — at a cost of \$761.25, no GST or PST. The first church in Valley Centre was dedicated in 1914 and rang in at \$600. St. Paul's, Eckville, began in 1920. This small congregation joined the United Church in 1925, but saw the light 10 years later and returned to the Presbyterian fold. Memorial Church in Sylvan Lake, one of Alberta's *other* resort areas, was dedicated in 1922. Memorial Church in Rocky Mountain House was dedicated 40 years later. St. Andrew's in Orkney, where there has been a Presbyterian presence since 1912, stands as a symbol of perseverance and the Protestant work ethic. Actually, if you stand the church beside the community centre and a nearby farm,

you pretty much have Orkney. Attendance at worship services there hovers around 30, but what's truly remarkable is an average church school attendance of almost 20. St. Andrew's, the other church in Red Deer, is much more recent than its neighbour, having served the West Park community since 1959.

Of course, not all the churches Stanley Reid wrote glowingly about in the *Record* in 1963 are still around — the church in Lousana, for example. (Now *there's* a name that conjures up memories of a student minister and his younger brother driving from Lousana to Ontario in a '52 Chevy they purchased for \$25 ... but that's another story.) But what is still around is a delightful blend: a blend of small urban and rural churches; a blend of Canadian landscape featuring mountains, lakes and prairies; and a blend of clergy that currently includes three men and three women ranging in age from thirtysomething to sixtysomething, several retired ministers and an active lay minister.

The presbytery meets five times a year, with "weather permitting" a familiar and long-standing proviso. In a letter to his wife written from Calgary in 1892, mission superintendent Rev. James Robertson tells of an unsuccessful attempt to reach Olds from Poplar Grove (Innisfail) during a blizzard and of his return at about 1 a.m.

According to the clerk, Ruth Ann Sigurdson, the presbytery is "full of people who have a heart for the Lord and want to see his kingdom grow." They assist in this growth in various ways: by keeping ministry to children in the forefront through Camp Kannawin and other programs, in visible witness through its presbytery-wide massed choir event held every year on Palm Sunday, and with projects such as the yearly grain harvest for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank conducted by members of St. Paul's, Eckville.

There is some evidence that, when people come to the Presbytery of Central Alberta, they stay — two ministers have been there for close to 50 years and another for almost 20. There is also evidence that, despite the struggles caused by change and uncertainty, a common goal remains among the presbytery's members: to serve God in whatever way they can. **R**

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Being present to the Presence

The opportunities for prayer are as endless as our loving Creator

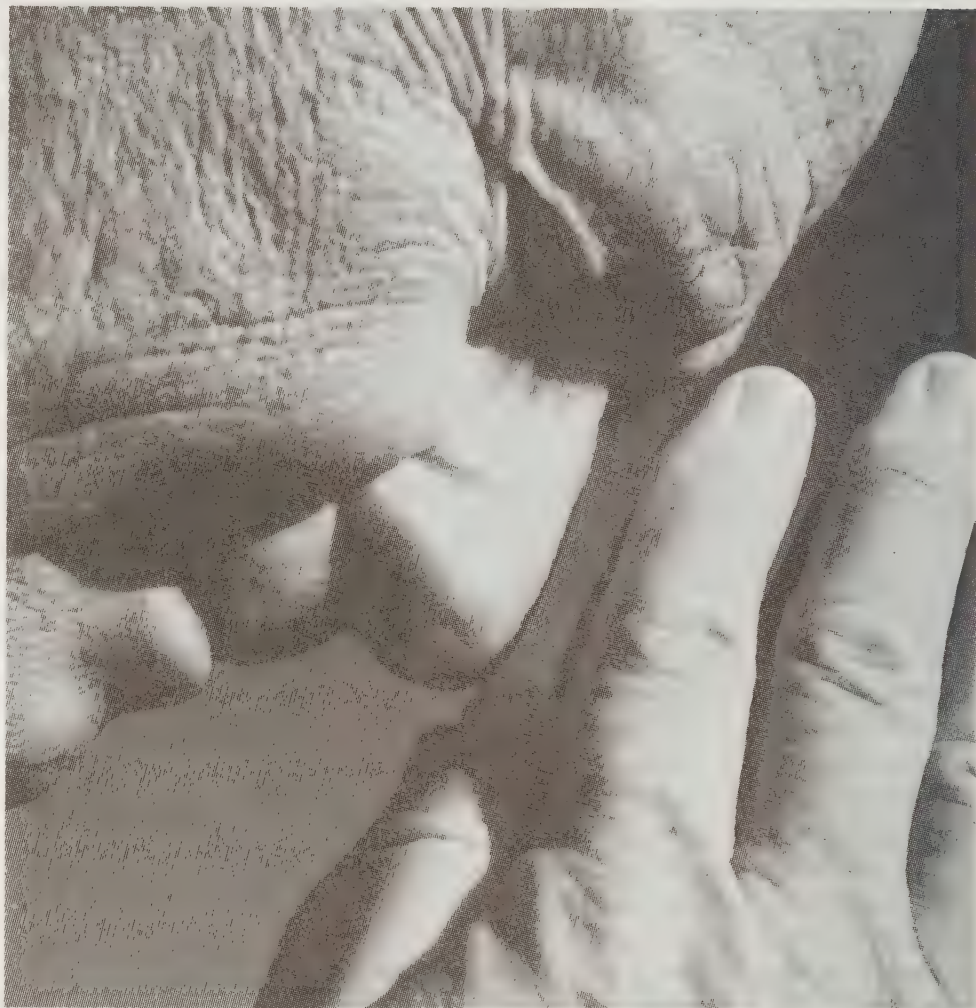
by Sabrina Caldwell

When Moses climbed Mount Sinai (or Horeb) to find food for his flock, he met with the living God from out of a burning bush (Exodus 3). The voice he heard directed him to tell the people “Yahweh: I am” had spoken. This early revelation was of a God who is and a God who is present.

At Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation of this Present One in the infant Jesus, who bore the appellation “Emmanuel: God with us.” In the hours before his death, Jesus told his disciples: “I will not leave you orphaned; I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth ...” (John 14:16-18). At the end of Matthew’s Gospel, the Risen Christ proclaimed, “Remember, I am with you always to the end of the age” (28:20). At the heart of our faith is the God who is present.

Christ came so God could be present with us and so we could live in communion with this God of Presence. The gift God gives to allow us to do this is prayer. Prayer isn’t simply the words addressed to God on a Sunday morning, or the request for guidance made before a meeting, or the expression of our own deepest thoughts in a private moment or even a conversation with God. To be clear, all those things are forms of prayer; prayer encompasses them all. But prayer is also something larger than any one of these: prayer is living our lives in the presence of God. It is living our lives present to the One who is present to us. It is to live consciously knowing we belong to Christ (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

Many people have a deep longing to live in the awareness of God’s presence. Perhaps this is what Paul was trying to express when he gave the early churches



those bewildering goals about prayer: “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), “pray in the Spirit on every possible occasion” (Ephesians 6:18), “lift your hands in reverent prayer in every place” (1 Timothy 2:8).

In the spiritual classic *The Way of the Pilgrim*, a man moved by the encouragement of Paul in these Scripture passages set out on a journey to discover how to do this. His first realization was that knowing about prayer and living in prayer are two different things. The beauty of the story is the man did come to attain his goal. His awareness of God grew until it

became a part of his very being. He became present to God in every breath he took and within his every thought. For this man, prayer came through his discovery of what is known as the Jesus Prayer, an adaptation by the Orthodox Christian community of the tax collector’s words in Luke 18:10-13: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” He recited and meditated on these words until his goal melted away into the reality of his life.

The learning for us is that the deepest form of prayer grows out of our intentional practice of praying. Whenever we

spend time in prayer or say a prayer, we are living if only for a moment in awareness of God's presence. While we are familiar with modes of prayer and times of private devotion, we all have difficulty praying at times. Sometimes our minds are restless and distracted, sometimes our words seem to bounce off the ceiling and sometimes we have doubts or sinful attitudes that block our hearts. Too often we come to God only in times of crisis. Our prayers can consist of asking for things or help as if God were a McDonald's drive-through — open 24/7 to give us what we want. At times we are reminded of the clergyman in the Monty Python sketch who goes on at length about how big God is. We, too, can offer hollow praises reciting the divine virtues to God without thought or engagement.

How do we move beyond these barriers so that prayer may flow and so we can live awake to the living God? There are no blanket answers to that question. Each person has his or her own unique relationship with God and path to walk. As a spiritual director, I have had the honour of accompanying a number of people as they come into a more vibrant relationship with God. While wide-sweeping suggestions can be made in an article, each person needs to experiment and discern the key approach or path in his or her life.

People frequently say they pray in the car while driving because it is the only place they can find solitude. Most of us try to settle into prayer with the phone ringing, the e-mail popping, the deadlines looming or the children seeking our attention. Finding a place of stillness is not easy. But it is not that difficult either. Any place can be that place of stillness if we are able to limit our distractions. Many find it helpful to pray in the same room and even in the same chair. Like runners whose endorphins rise when they put on their runners, our bodies soon associate a particular place and physical position with a time of prayer. It helps to deal first with the things that will beg your immediate attention, have the tools you need at hand (Bible, journal, candle, pen, picture, art supplies, music, etc.), choose a time when there are fewer interruptions and turn on the answering machine.

Take a few minutes to be with God



We can place ourselves within God's pathway by prayerfully walking a labyrinth such as this Chartres-style, 11-circuit labyrinth.

before leaping into your agenda. Follow your breathing while focusing your mind and heart on Christ. Be aware of the presence of God with you, in you and around you. Allow yourself to be as conscious of this as possible. Rest in God's presence. You may decide to do nothing more for the time you are with God than this — and this is prayer! In classical Christian spirituality, prayer like this is a form of contemplative (without word or thought) prayer, known as centring prayer. It is prayer in which we empty ourselves of all thoughts and distractions so we can simply "be" with God in a union of love. Unlike other practices (e.g., Buddhist sitting), in the Christian tradition, we empty ourselves to make room for the Holy Spirit.

If you find the distractions are not coming from outside of yourself but from your own restless spirit and wandering mind, simply notice that has happened. Return your attention to God by following your breathing again, by repeating a brief phrase (such as a name for God, a favourite Scripture, a line from a hymn, etc.) or by focusing on a

symbol (such as a candle or cross). If you normally have no trouble focusing but your mind is drawn to something, you will need to discern if this is a complete distraction (the grocery list) or something about which you need to pray (e.g., someone in need). Knowing oneself and exploring our depths with honesty is also important. If there are issues with other people, deeply buried feelings, unhealed scars, neurotic or selfish behaviours, we can freely ask Christ in his love and grace to shine his light on them. Don't expect instant resolution. The journey inward is a long one but worth every effort because knowing God and knowing ourselves go hand in hand.

The elements that make up a particular time of prayer vary. Prayer is a flow of love and connectedness with God — a flow that goes both ways. So we need to develop ways to listen to God. There are a number of ways to heed God's voice more carefully through Scripture. One of the tools God gives us to listen is our imagination. As you read a passage of Scripture, allow the scene to come to life in your mind. Place yourself within it.

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Notice what is said or done to you or by you or by someone else. Notice your response. Using the same Bible passage over a period of time can help you move more deeply into its rich and sometimes hidden treasure. If you are a creative person, and even if you are not, you may decide to use dance, art, journaling, music, etc. to express your loving praise to God or to capture what has happened during your time of meditation. We pray not only with our words but also with our bodies, giving expression to our hearts.

There are also other classical forms of meditative prayer such as *lectio divina* (divine reading) or *collatio*, which a spiritual director may be able to guide you through. These are grounded in the use of Scripture. *Lectio divina* has four movements: reading, meditation (employing the imagination and intellect), speaking and contemplation (being in the presence of God without word or thought). *Collatio* (from which we get the verb to collate) requires the person praying to go over the same Scripture passage three times, listening and responding in various ways.

Other forms of prayer may work better for you. You may be comfortable using the written prayers of another and making them your own. Many people find that a walk with God in nature is the place where they are most present to God. You might also take a cue from Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God* and intentionally carry out a task (cooking dinner, housework,

riding the elevator, preparing a Sunday school lesson, sorting clothes for charity) mindful of being in God's presence. If you are fortunate enough to have access to a labyrinth, you might make a point of using it on a regular basis. By prayerfully walking the labyrinth with our hearts open to Christ, we place ourselves within God's pathway — often for a glorious, uninterrupted, focused time of prayer (an 11-circuit labyrinth takes about an hour to walk).

The opportunities for prayer are endless — as endless as our loving Creator and as limitless as life itself. By grace the Holy Spirit is as present as our breath, moving in us and around us and through us. Christ is here at every moment, waiting for us to open our eyes and see him, to open our hearts and share love with him, to open our lives and live in him. The more intentionally we pray, awake to all that is, the more naturally living in prayer becomes, until our lives are our prayer. For at the heart of life is God. The most Holy God of the entire universe is here. Let us pray. **R**

Rev. Sabrina Caldwell is associate minister at Oakridge Church, London, Ont., and a trained spiritual director on staff of the Pacific Jubilee Program in Spiritual Formation and Direction at Chalmers Institute, Vancouver School of Theology. She also offers an online course on prayer for the Elders' Institute.

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly:
www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

For further reflection and discussion

- What kind of relationship do you want to have with Christ?
- What is the greatest barrier to prayer for you?
- When and where do you experience God's presence?
- What forms of prayer help to keep you aware of God's presence throughout the day?
- Is there a new prayer exercise you would like to try?

For further reading

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Spire Books, 1958)
 T. Allen Smith (translator), *The Way of the Pilgrim* (Doubleday, 1978)
 Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray* (Paulist Press, 1970)
 Thomas H. Green, SJ, *Opening to God* (Ave Maria Press, 1977)
 Esther De Waal, *The Celtic Way of Prayer* (Doubleday, NY 1997)

A spiritual director can be found through most retreat centres, particularly those within the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions. You may also contact Spiritual Directors International, 1329 Seventh Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122, U.S.A. or Spiritual Directors of Ontario through Lorraine Dykman at l.dykman@rogers.com. You should ask for training qualifications of any director and contract for a few sessions before making a final decision.

People seek salvation their own way

Pop theology mixes divergent ideas into a personal faith

by Andrew Faiz

Just before Christmas, an Ipsos-Reid poll stated only 78 per cent of Canadians believe in God. That figure includes 14 per cent who say they “sometimes believe in God” but not always. So only 64 per cent definitely believe. Other numbers from the poll:

- 66 per cent of Canadians identify themselves as Christians
- 23 per cent of Canadians go to a religious service “once a week or so”
- 45 per cent of the Christians say they pray daily
- 61 per cent of Canadians believe in angels
- 26 per cent of that group have had “personal experiences” with angels
- 43 per cent of Canadians believe in “out-of-body experiences”
- 29 per cent in “past-life regression”
- 27 per cent in “channelling” the dead
- 18 per cent in “witchcraft and spells.”

This is a snapshot — incomplete, of course — of pop theology. Angels and aliens and God — all conflated into a confused and complicated religious ideology.

Take another look at the numbers above and rearrange them a little. Of the 66 per cent who claim to be Christians, up to half must believe in angels and some must have had some relationship with angels. Of that 66 per cent who are Christians, at least 10 per cent must have had out-of-body experiences, some believe in past-life regression, others in channelling the dead. A handful adds witchcraft to their Christianity. (And Roman Catholics are more likely to believe in channelling than Protestants!)

I met one of those Christians once. She was a regular congregant at a church where I was a lay minister in the early 1980s. She was a stalwart member, always there with baked goods at the sale. She had vivid memories of past lives,

believed it was possible to speak to the dead and claimed to have had an out-of-body experience. And she believed in the Book of Joseph of Arimathea. She had also written a chapbook on the healing powers of a particular herb, the name of which I no longer recall. I think of her often and marvel at the cobbling together of disparate ideas into a personal faith. I remember during Bible study how she was always uncomfortable with an angry Christ or a wrathful God. She liked her Christianity — her faith in general — to be nice and supportive.

The majority of Canadian Christians believe God is an impersonal spiritual force

I started this column six months ago to understand the theology of pop culture better. As icons, God and Jesus are malleable — they mean different things to different people. They are used variously in pop culture. It is a curious and fascinating area of study, and I can’t ever get enough of it. And polls are another expression of this complicated ideology.

Let’s go back to the stats. What God do we believe in? Seventy-seven per cent of Canadians who believe in God say God is an *impersonal spiritual force*, while 17 per cent hold the view that God is a *person*. Let’s mix these numbers with the 66 per cent who are Christians. That would mean the majority of us believe God is an *impersonal spiritual force* — more Holy Spirit (though it’s hardly impersonal), let’s say, than God or Christ. Eighty-seven per cent of us believe God is in all nature; 76 per cent believe God is present in all humans. Thirteen per cent believe God “punishes”

us through illness, misfortune and natural disaster. (That 13 per cent obviously believe in a very active and personal God.)

Nearly 80 per cent of us who believe in God say God is the one who created us but left us with free will (the impersonal spirit!). I view these polls as proof of free will. And that is always messy stuff. For example, the less educated we are, the more likely we are to believe in God. But the poorer we are (assuming poverty and lack of education go together), the more likely we are to believe in astrology and horoscopes. That means there is at least one Christian in Canada (might even be a Presbyterian) who has all the bases covered: God, I Ching, angels and channelling. That’s a lot of free will at work; it might not be any theology we recognize, but it is pop theology.

It is the imagination of individuals seeking their own personal salvation. We no longer live in a simple world (assuming the world was ever simple). Few of us live in a monocultural environment — we have access to and regular experience of people who are different from us. (I was born an Anglican in Pakistan, my great-grandparents were born Hindu and Muslim in India, and here I am writing as a Presbyterian in Canada — you know the landscape has shifted, if only to accommodate me.) This bombardment of multiple influences — faiths, cultures, languages, ideas, music, sexualities, etc. — is bound to affect us all. It is what I call pop Christianity; but it is also the story, proven annually in these polls, of individuals seeking spiritual solace in their lives. ■

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

called to wonder

Written by Jennifer O'Farrell,
St. Mark's Church, Don Mills, Ont.

How many 3-letter and 4-letter words can you make using the letters in the word TEMPTATIONS?

To prepare for a ministry of teaching and healing, Jesus went away for 40 days (Luke 4:1-13). In this story, we read that Jesus met three temptations while alone in the wilderness. Jesus prayed to God and wisely chose to do the right thing.

What is temptation? "Temptation" is something that appeals strongly to us and we want to try to do it or to have it, even though we also know it is something wrong or foolish.

The season of Lent is a time of preparation. This is a good time to make talking to God part of our everyday life. Prayer helps us to be strong inside. We get to know God and learn to live the way God wants us to live.

TEMPATIONS



You will find more learning activities online at:
www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html

I can pray to God

(Tune: Jesus Loves Me)

I can pray to God all day,
if I'm working or at play.
When I'm happy or I'm sad,
God is with me; I am glad.
Yes, God will hear me.
Yes, God will hear me.
Yes, God will hear me.
I'll pray to God each day.

To read a list of possible words that can be made from the letters in the long word **TEMPATIONS**, hold this page upside down in front of a mirror.

2POT 2TOB 1AME 1APE 1EAM 1ENT 1E21 1IME 1INT 1IB2 1OTE
PANT PE21 2AME 2EAM 2EAT 2ENT 2NAP 2NIP 2OME 2PIN 2PIT
INTO MAIN MANE MATE MEAN MEAT MITT NAME NEAT NOTE OPEN
TAN TAB TEA TEN TIN TIP TOE TON TOB
PAN PAT PEN PET PIN PIT POT 2AT 2AP 2ET 2IN 2IT 2ON TAM
MIA ANT APE ATE EAT MAN MAP MAT MEN MET MOB NAP NET OAT

William Mackie Hepburn

The elder who took steps for those who couldn't

by Tom Dickey

Right Rev. Alistair Haggart, Primus of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, once remarked: "At its best, there is no office in the [Anglican] church to compare with the eldership in the Presbyterian system of church government." Say "Amen," somebody.

Any long-serving Presbyterian minister can recall names he has quietly thanked God for in those calm, restorative hours following a session meeting. Anyone who has been part of a Presbyterian congregation will remember, with a smile, more than one elder who always seemed to be there when the church needed them. Mention the name Bill Hepburn to anyone at Knox, Crescent, Kensington and First Church in Montreal and you are likely to see that smile.

William Mackie Hepburn was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1915 and moved to Canada with his family in 1926. Being one of 10 children no doubt contributed to young Bill's drive, if only to get out of the house. He took night courses to finish high school and, at 14, landed a job with Montreal Tramways in the patrol department.

Ten years later, two memorable events took place in Bill's life: he married Willamina Brown and he joined the Royal Highland Regiment. Soon he was on his way to London, England, where he served with the Black Watch throughout Europe, attaining the rank of sergeant major. He returned to Montreal in 1945.

A few years later, Bill and Willamina began their long association with Knox, Crescent, Kensington and First — an association that, for Bill, would last for more than 50 years. Bill was ordained an elder of the congregation in 1969 and served the position with character and integrity for more than 30 years. He was



also a member of the board of managers for more than 25 years. But outside the walls of KCK&F (as it is affectionately called by those in a hurry), Bill Hepburn will be remembered for something else.

It all began when the local Royal Canadian Legion asked him for a donation toward a special bus that would

enable paraplegic Second World War veterans to add a little diversity to their lives. A bus would provide access for them to events such as football games, picnics and county fairs. Bill took it one step further on behalf of those who couldn't step at all. He approached one of his bosses at Montreal Tramways

about adapting a company bus. Soon he was organizing trips across the region for the veterans — in their own bus.

One day, Bill showed up with a basketball and suggested the veterans give the game a whirl, so to speak. By November 1951, the team was playing exhibition games. Harold Atkins of the *Montreal Star* was among the spectators at the team's first game. The next day, he wrote about the "wonders of the paralyzed," and the Montreal Wheelchair Wonders found their name.

With no other wheelchair team to play against, the veterans took on teams from the Montreal Basketball League, who, of course, would also use wheelchairs. Although the Wonders made the most of their opportunities, playing exhibition matches in high schools, city sports centres and parks — anywhere they could get a game — Bill was never completely comfortable with the situation. He believed the exhibition games were exhibitions in more than one way and showed a lack of respect for those confined permanently to wheelchairs.

Things started to change in 1953,

however, when the Wonders expanded their playing field by becoming the first Canadian team to compete at the Stoke Mandeville games in Buckinghamshire, England. (Created by Dr. Ludwig Guttmann as a rehabilitation program for injured veterans in England, the annual

As an elder, Bill Hepburn provided a happy combination of the spiritual and temporal

Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Games later provided the inspiration for the Paralympics, held every Olympic year.) In 1954, the Wonders scored another basket for paraplegics, becoming the first team from Canada to be invited to New York City for a competition known today as the NWBT (or National Wheelchair Basketball Tournament for long).

In 1967, when Canadians were busy celebrating the 100th anniversary of their

country, Bill persuaded the federal government to contribute \$25,000 for the Paraplegic Centennial Games. The event attracted more than 100 athletes and prompted the formation of the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association.

Over the years, the Wonders continued to remain in the public eye, playing games during halftime whenever the Harlem Globetrotters came to the Montreal Forum. Several members continued to participate in charity fundraisers into the 1990s, with Bill as their manager.

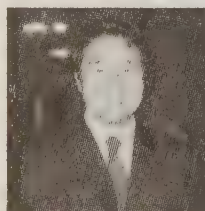
Bill Hepburn died on May 11, 2003, at the age of 87. Among the many awards he received during his life, he was probably most proud of the Governor General's Caring Award, presented to him in 1997 in recognition of his efforts to make society more compassionate. It was a compassion he took with him everywhere, whether to his church or his community. William Mackie Hepburn was an elder who clearly saw his function as including both the spiritual and temporal realms and he provided all who knew him with a happy combination of the two. **[R]**



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Paul Kang, 1st year student

Destinations

The author talked of the thinker's "ample measure of disbelief." Nevertheless, he plodded on through thigh-high snowdrifts to reach his God. There comes a day when we choose the dogged drive onward or shrug and toss the question aside, at least for now. My friends and I, as children, had "penny hikes." We'd toss a coin at every corner. Years later my mother panicked at our tales. Most of our journey is like that. The heads of wheat whip in wind and we travel and whirl just so. Dürer's Knight saw a high city, pushed on, the way harder, not easier. Yet something burns in those determined hearts. Some gift.

— Carol Hamilton

obituaries

Beaverton Church in Beaverton, Ont., mourns the loss of two faithful members and long-time elders of the congregation: **Mary Hill**, Dec. 23, 2002; **Jean Lambe**, Dec. 20, 2003. We shall miss their wise counsel and support of all activities for the advancement of God's kingdom. We shall remember them with love.

Harvey, James (Hamish) Munro, a long-time resident of Mission, B.C., passed away peacefully into the presence of his Lord, Friday, January 23, 2004, at age 87 years. He was predeceased by his wife, Margaret, in February 2000 and his daughter, Catriona, in January 1990. He is survived by his son-in-law, Peter Stephenson, in Ontario, and many good friends. Hamish immigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1949. As a lay minister, he served in Regina, St. Paul's Mission, and Castlegar. Funeral services were held at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church with Rev. Robin Ross officiating. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 8469 Cedar St., Mission, BC V4S 1A1, or the Alzheimer Society of B.C., 20471 Douglas Cres., Langley, BC V3A 4B6.

Hein, Rev. Richard, died suddenly on Jan. 9, 2004, at the age of 55. He is survived by his wife, Judy, daughter Jacquelyn and son Richard, three grandchildren, two brothers and one sister. Rick served in the Canadian Armed Forces (Navy) for 10 years before being called to the ministry. He was a student minister in Lockport, Man., as well as South Eldon and Woodville, Ont. Ordained in 1989, he was called to Alberton-West Point, P.E.I., then Cochrane, Ont. At the time of his death, he was at Burnbrae and Campbellford, Ontario churches.

MacKay, Lorna, 87, Oct. 10, 2003. Lifelong treasured member of Knox Presbyterian Church, Harrington, Ont. We are grateful for all her contributions in her special gentle manner to church, as honorary life member of WMS and community.

Nicholls, Donald (Dan), 94, died Nov. 3, 2003. Dan served Knox Presbyterian Church, Midland, Ont., for over 75 years as a member and for 53 years as an elder. He was always a Christian example to others through his faithful presence, his quiet leadership and his dedication. He had a genuine love for his church and his many friends in the congregation and the Midland community. He, as well as his wife, Bert, will be long remembered with fond affection and love.

Reid, Evyleen May, Jan. 6, 2004. Beloved wife of the late Rev. A. Newton Reid, loving mother of Janet. Accomplished organist and accompanist, she was the organist at Richmond Presbyterian Church where she met her husband. Together they served the charges of Colborne,

Lakeport, Brighton; Avonton, Motherwell; Chesley, Salem; and Holstein, Dromore, Knox Normanby. Retired to Prescott (St. Andrew's) with her husband and where she was an organist at Cardinal Anglican and Johnstown United. Active in the WMS and women's groups in various charges and presbyterials. Lovingly remembered by all she touched.

In memoriam

English, Elva, St. John's Presbyterian Church, Kingston, Ont., passed away on March 11, 2002, in her 77th year. Elva served her Lord in a number of capacities throughout her life including clerk of session, board of managers, elder and Sunday school teacher. Elva was a devoted member acting in the capacities of president, secretary and treasurer throughout her services with the Ladies Aid and WMS. A dinner honouring her devotion was held at the time of Elva's retirement from her position of clerk of session. Elva's leadership and friendship is missed by her congregation.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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SUMMER ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 9-12, 2004. "BE NOT AFRAID." Common Christian Witness in a Culture of Fear. An Experience in Dialogue. With keynote speaker Tom Yoder Neufeld, Assoc. Professor, Peace & Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, ON. Register by April 15, 2004: Ray Temmerman: phone 204-284-1147, e-mail: SEI-Winnipeg@shaw.ca, website: interchurchfamilies.org/sei/index.shtm. \$250 - Live-in; \$150 - Commute. Planned by Winnipeg Churches, Sponsored by Prairie Centre for Ecumenism.

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Ordinations and inductions

Rev. Katherine McCloskey, inducted, St. Andrew's, Stirling; St. Andrew's, West Huntingdon, Ont., Feb. 1.

Rev. Fred Stewart, inducted, St. Paul's, Carluke; Knox, Binbrook, Ont., Jan. 11.

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Trouble is not always the best keeper

A loving God speaks directly to each of us in the Bible

by David Webber

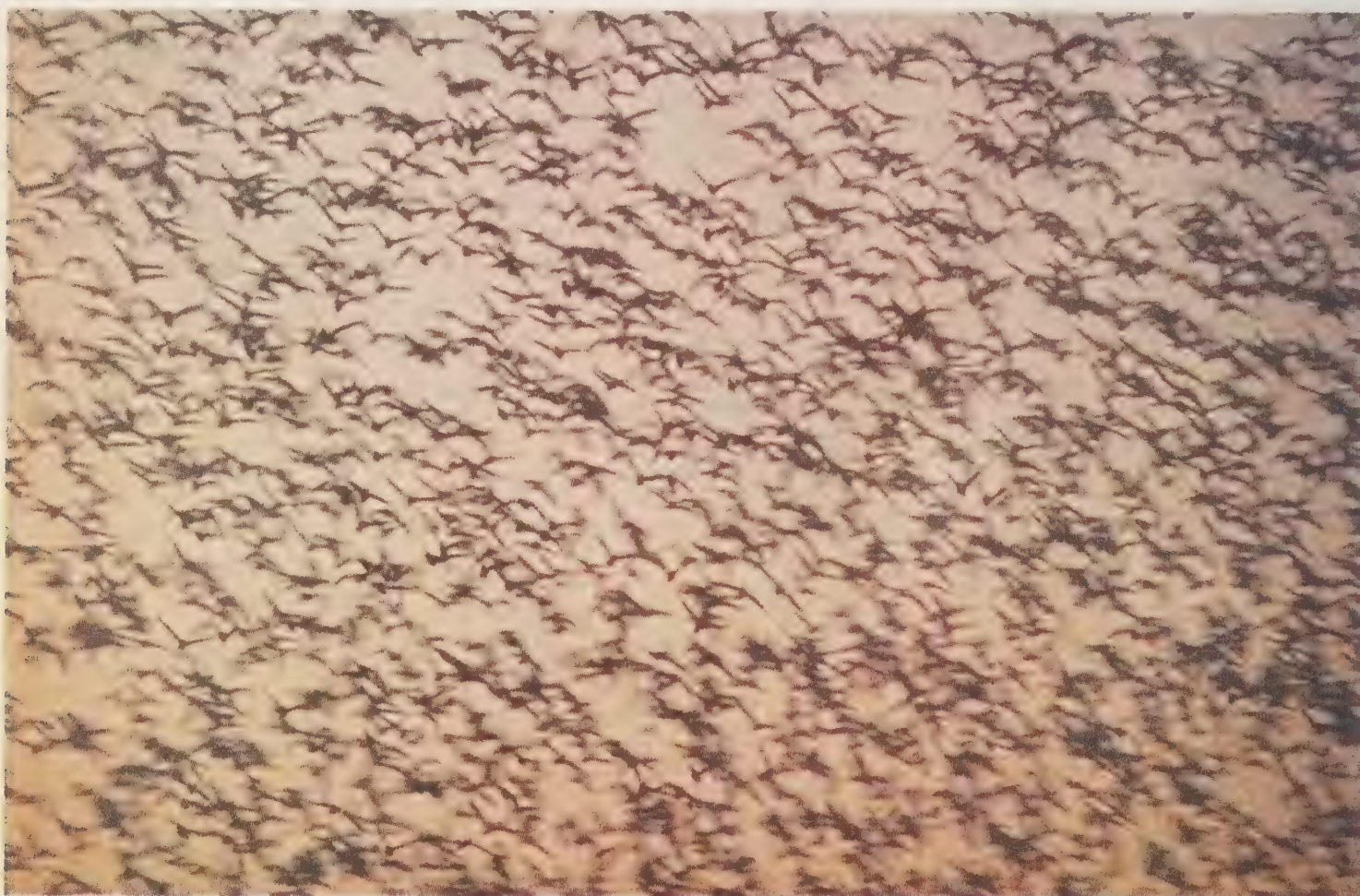
I remember a day a couple of years ago. It was the first day of spring and, in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of British Columbia, it was -25 C. It had been hovering down there for the previous three weeks. To the north of us, in the Peace Country, it was a good 10 degrees colder. To the south of us, it was snowing like Satan had skated to work for the morning shift. Lotus Land got upwards of 40 centimetres of fresh snow in one spring night, followed by a full blizzard. For the Lower Mainland, where tulips and daffodils are usually in full bloom by the first day of spring, 40 centimetres of

fresh snow is more than a tad odd. In fact, the weather patterns all over British Columbia were downright strange that year.

On that morning, when I tiptoed across glacial linoleum to peer out the window at the thermometer, I discovered our two large feeders seething with birds. They looked like maggots on a piece of ripe meat. The large spruce tree adjacent to our feeders had so many birds in waiting it looked like a dog infested with fleas. I was so busy watching this spectacle I accidentally dropped my coffee mug into the sink, making a heck of a clatter. Every masquerading maggot and

flea instantly took flight and, for a moment, I thought spruce tree, bird feeder and house were going to leave with them, sucked away in a vortex of a thousand flapping wings. And then they were back with a vengeance.

It's a funny thing. Normally we try to keep the birds coming to our feeders as long as we can each spring. Linda, Chelsea and I relish watching and listening to the feeding birds all winter, so we resort to all kinds of devious temptations to keep them faithfully feeding as long as possible. We keep the feeders filled with their favourite seeds and little bits of fruit



and nuts. We even stock the larder with two large blocks of tasty suet. Regardless of what we do, warm weather oozes in every year toward the end of February and the flow of birds has all but dried up by the first week in March. We may get the occasional flush of waxwings or blackbirds but, for the main part, our feathered friends have abandoned us well before the first day of spring. But not in the year when spring lost itself in arctic mimicry. Many species returned from their winter vacations to find themselves in the middle of what appeared to be a cruel Franklin-ish prank. Just to survive, they had to join with our normal winter residents at the feeders on that first day of spring. Trouble is a good keeper.

There are mores reasons to read the Bible than only to calm my fluttering heart


I pondered this the other day as I was driving to the office to wrestle with the Bible. The whole bird thing seemed to metaphorically reflect me and some of my attitudes toward the Bible. I have the occupational privilege of regularly cracking open the Bible. For a pastor who is always preparing sermons, services and studies on Scripture, you would think that coming to the Bible daily to feed from it personally would be as easy as a cop succumbing to a fat-filled cream puff at the local coffee shop. In my experience, it never has. I tend to be like birds with feeders. Oh, I regularly read what I need to for preaching or for Bible study or to find personal comfort in stormy times; but seldom do I read my Bible just as a way of bringing pleasure to God or myself. But especially when trouble blows, in or out of season, boy do I flock to Scripture. Trouble is a good keeper.

Or is it? If trouble and fear largely motivate my personal use of Scripture, is that a good thing? I know it's not a bad thing. But is it a good thing? In the 16th century, John Calvin wrote in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: "For as the aged, or those whose sight is defective, when any book however fair is set

before them, though they perceive that there is something written are scarcely able to make out two consecutive words, but, when aided by glasses, begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering together the impressions of Deity, which, till then, lay confused in our minds, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly."

If what Calvin wrote about Scripture all those years ago is true, why am I so birdish when it comes to feeding on it? If the Bible does gather together all the impressions of Deity, if the Bible does dissipate the darkness of our own eyes regarding the Creator and if the Bible does show us the true God clearly, there have to be more reasons to read it than only to calm my fluttering heart in the midst of an unseasonable icy blast of trouble.

A few years ago, inspired by Psalm 119:105, a young Amy Grant wrote one of my favourite hymns, from which I quote: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will not forget your love for me, and yet my heart forever is wandering. Jesus, be my guide and hold me to your side, and I will love you to the end."

Amy Grant's hymn and the Psalm that inspired it remind me Scripture is not a bird feeder. It reminds me that, with regard to God and his revealing Word, trouble is not a good keeper — or, at least, not the best keeper. The Bible is a loving God speaking directly and clearly to me. It is not just the "Word of God"; neither is it just the "Word of God for me." Such theological classifications of Scripture fall far short of describing the Bible and may well lead to birdish approaches to it. The Bible is nothing less than God's loving speech whispered into my own ear. As such, love is what needs to draw me to Scripture — both God's love for me and my love for God. And loving words are most powerfully shared intimately, in quiet places of solitude where one can tilt the ear and listen, hungrily and devotedly. Divine intimate love: with regard to Scripture, this is a good keeper. 

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen* and *And the Aspens Whisper*.

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The Passion presents more questions than answers

It is impossible these days to avoid the passionate debate over *The Passion of The Christ*. Contradictory letters to editors, opinions, interviews and reviews abound. For those interested in pondering the place of this movie in society, it may be helpful to consider four broad questions: What has raised the question of whether the film is anti-Semitic? Is it faithful to the gospel story? Will it help or hinder the message of Christianity? Is it good filmmaking?

The answers seem to be mixed. There is no doubt the film has stirred anti-Semitic feelings, although that doesn't necessarily mean the film itself is anti-Semitic. After viewing the movie, a church in Colorado displayed a sign stating Jews Killed the Lord Jesus and the word Settled! It is hollow irony the church is named Lovingway United Pentecostal Church. "It's settled," said Pastor Maurice Gordon. "The word of God is the final word."

But the word of God says Italians tortured and executed Jesus. It's interesting how the Jews have been tagged with this vile accusation throughout history when Pontius Pilate was a Roman (we would call him Italian today) and soldiers under his authority actually killed Jesus. Yet Romans in Italy's capital city today bear no stigma about the actions of their forebears, while Jews still do.

Moreover, if viewers find the characters of the Jewish leaders as one-dimensional as our columnist Andrew Faiz did, does that not contribute to anti-Semitism? This leads into the question about how faithful the movie is to the biblical text. The answer would seem to depend on how biblically faithful one thinks certain Good Friday devotions are. The movie's plot is clearly underpinned by the 14 Stations of the Cross familiar to most Roman Catholics and some other Christians. While Christians who use this devotion would likely argue there is nothing *contrary* to the biblical accounts, there are clearly many people and actions not found in the New Testament. Yet these are precisely the kind of additions that outraged the Reformers. That's what *sola scriptura* was — is — about. Despite this, many conservative Protestants have endorsed the movie as being accurate and realistic. For instance, Danae Dobson, daughter of Focus on the Family's James Dobson, said: "Few liberties are taken with the gospel account, and the extra dialogue added helps round out the characters without damaging historical or biblical accuracy."

One might only observe that Ms. Dobson's father permits no liberties to be taken with the Gospels when arguing about controversial social issues today.

Unless one treats the Gospels as reportage (reading accounts of the same event in four separate newspapers today reveals a wide range of variations) — and most biblical scholars don't — the additional non-biblical material may be a small offence. But among Christians who read the Gospels as completely accurate historically, why aren't they objecting strongly to all the interpolated material (the character of Veronica, for instance)?

All these questions ignore the brutally mundane observations that it is completely unrealistic that a person could be so beaten as the character of Jesus in this movie and not be dead long before being crucified, not to mention having a cross of a few hundred pounds fall on one's head and somehow surviving.

The question of whether this is a good film is best left to the viewer. Most independent reviewers have panned it. If the movie is meant to challenge emotionally, anyone familiar with contemporary mystery plays or an enactment of the *St. John Passion* likely feels the emotional wrench in the pit of one's stomach when the sound of a nail being driven into wood echoes in the church on Good Friday. It is doubtful the bloody beating of Jesus in the film can be said to improve on that.

Whether the film will help or hinder the message of Christianity remains to be seen. But it's worth recalling that, about 2,000 years ago, there were a number of Jewish sects who also saw apocalyptic signs in the events of their time. Many called for repentance and a return to strict adherence to the laws of purity and holiness. Into their midst came a young man who, while he certainly knew his Scripture, seemed to revel in turning their arguments upside down. He preached of a God who cared less for those laws than purity of heart. He spoke of the inner essence of God as love. He caused such dissent and disorder that certain powerful elements of the religious community eventually rallied their followers to defend the orthodox faith with passion.

And that is what led to the Passion.

David Harris

God cares for all Abraham's children

The church leaders' letter against anti-Semitism (Canadian News, February) was not helpful in assisting me, a minister, or the congregations I serve to sort out the complicated situation of Jewish (religious and secular) communities in Canada and in the world.

As a Christian, I am a spiritual heir to Abraham and Sarah. As a follower of Christ, I am also enjoined to care for all for whom God cares. "Semites" also includes the house of Abraham and Hagar — Muslims. Genesis states that God heard the cries over Ishmael and promised to love him and his descendants. Sarah's child came later. I want to be allowed to weep for all Abraham's children.

A claim to be working against "anti-Semitism" that does not include the house of Hagar falls, I think, dangerously close to the charge of Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*, that our varied racisms are really "bourgeois humanism" in disguise.

Wayne G. Smith,
Cookstown, Ont.

I am glad Christian churches are speaking out about the escalating discrimination against the Jews in Canada. I recommend *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany 1743-1933* by Amos Elon to *Record* readers. The seeds of the

later Holocaust were planted and cultivated many years before it happened. The systemic rejection of the Jews was part of the cultural landscape. If only Christians had shown discernment and courage earlier, the later course of history may well have been radically different.

Olive R. Anstice,
Toronto

Religious infighting is the major tragedy of our time

Your letters to the editor are no different from those in any other religious paper. Every issue boils down to a standoff between conservatives who want nothing changed and liberals who want everything changed. (This infighting is difficult to understand when there are enough different churches around to accommodate everyone's religious belief.)

It's not only Christians who are at loggerheads with each other over who is on God's side and who isn't. Muslims are busily killing each other over the same question. Even the Jews are divided into conservative and liberal camps.

Millions of Christians believe they alone possess divine truth and those who disagree with them are condemned to spend eternity in the literal flames of Hell. On the other hand, millions of Muslims feel the same way about all non-Muslims. "God's chosen people," regardless of their religion or sect, solemnly believe the choice is between

their way and the highway to Hell, and they are leading us all into harm's way. That is the major tragedy of our time.

William Bedford,
Toronto

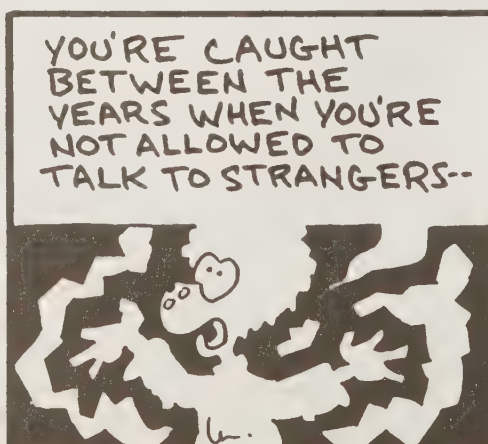
Listen to different viewpoints respectfully

I have watched for some time our attempt as a denomination to have a conversation about homosexuality. The way in which this has been conducted leaves me frustrated. Some seem to know the very mind of God — equating their literal interpretation of particular Scripture passages with what is in God's mind.

I remember similar ways of communicating during our discussions about the role of women in the church in the early 1960s when I was a student and a young minister. One of my friends delivered a particularly outstanding exposition of Scripture at General Assembly, demonstrating beyond question that the mind of God was that the offices of minister and elder should be restricted to men. He was listened to with respect, but the assembly vote indicated the commissioners were hearing a different message from God.

About 15 years later, having noticed that my friend had taken a 180-degree turn on the question of the role of women in the church, I asked him what had led to that radical change. His reply as I remember was, "I got married." I take from

Pontius' Puddle



this (and many other experiences shared by others) that human experience significantly affects our understanding of the mind of God. We should not be surprised. With the birth of Jesus, even God's way of letting us humans know God's mind changed radically. God's way became "enfleshed"; that is, experiential and relational.

I encourage us, as individuals and as a denomination, to listen carefully to the Christian experience of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters as well as to the Scriptures as we struggle to understand the mind of God. And I encourage us all to be respectful of one another and to keep open minds as we engage in these conversations.

*Rev. John C. Carr, PhD, C.Psych.,
Edmonton*

Quoting people out of context or simply failing to ask contextual questions is a sure way to create attention. The results can be damaging to people and to their reputations and careers (in the case of clergy, their calling).

The letter (February) addressing the comments by Rev. Gwen Brown (Canadian News, December) is a case in point. Ms. Brown did not dismiss our subordinate standards. When she said, "We pick and choose which subordinate standards we enforce," she was reflecting on the discussion in the Presbytery of Huron-Perth concerning the matter of ministers performing same-sex marriages. Proponents and opponents had appealed to Scripture and to our subordinate standards to make their points. No one distanced himself or herself from ordination vows.

The problem does not lie in fuzziness with regard to our confessional heritage, revisionism, anti-confessional theologies or a lack of respect for the authority of Scripture. Indeed, the opposite is true, and that is the difficulty and challenge. I hope we can listen to each other and accept each other's viewpoint even though we may disagree on matters such as same-sex marriage.

Ironically, Ms. Brown said nothing that compromised her ordination vows; however, the writer of the letter is regret-

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letters

continued

tably but surely suggesting a divisive course by mentioning "the prelude to an impending separation" and "the divorce court." That suggestion has breach of ordination vows written all over it since we are to seek the peace and unity of the church. A healthy church seeking to be the body of Christ in the world and speaking in love cannot be sectarian. There must be room for variety and differences of opinion. Such differences are inevitable if we believe the Holy Spirit is active among us, revealing new and even uncomfortable truth. May God give us enough grace to treat those whose theology is diametrically opposed to ours as brothers and sisters.

*Nicholas Vandermeij,
Seaforth, Ont.*

What the Moderator really said

A February News Brief regarding the Moderator of the Church of Scotland stated, "Prof. Torrance has said he would not be opposed to openly gay ministers." That statement in Scotland last spring triggered a loud cry of protest from many members of the Church of Scotland who understandably assumed he was referring to ministers who were practising their preference in openly gay relationships in manses.

On July 15, 2003, the Moderator wrote a lengthy article in the *Scotsman* (the national newspaper) to clarify his statement. Some relevant sentences from that statement include: "So what did I say? ... I confessed myself to be utterly untroubled by the ministry of a person of homosexual orientation. The newspaper reported this as my being 'untroubled by openly gay clergy.' ... I never spoke about homosexual practice. It is most unhelpful to imply that I did. I am well aware of the present position of both the Church of Scotland and the Church of England.... I am untroubled by the ordination of a person of self-disclosed homosexual orientation who lives a chaste and disciplined life ... I am not attempting to erode the discipline of faithfulness and chastity, which the church asks of its ministers."

*Rev. Dr. A. Gardiner Skelly,
St. Catharines, Ont.*

The term "openly gay" was the tag the British media applied to Rev. Jeffrey John, the Church of England priest whose proposal as bishop of Reading was controversial because he admitted to having had a homosexual relationship in the past, although for many years he has been celibate. It was in the context of the controversy over Canon John that Prof. Torrance was questioned about his view. The term "openly gay" is an unhappy one for those who would wish to discuss this issue in a theological perspective. It blurs the distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual practice, which our church and others have carefully guarded in doctrinal statements on human sexuality.

*Karla Wubbenhorst,
University of Aberdeen*

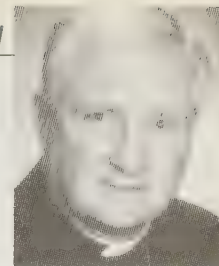
Are Presbyterians helping or only praying for people who suffer?

Fourteen million people die of HIV/AIDS and other treatable infectious diseases worldwide each year, and more than 95 per cent such deaths occur in the developing world. These figures include six million deaths from AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria. This suffering is almost totally ignored by our church. If we pray for the sick and suffering in the world but do nothing about it, are we not hypocrites?

*Rudy Kernohan,
London, Ont.*

Editor's note: *The Church's Response to AIDS by Karen Plater of Presbyterian World Service and Development (Feb. 2003) gives an account of what the Presbyterian Church is doing in response to the worldwide AIDS pandemic and suggests ways Presbyterians can become involved to help. PWS&D also has many other projects that contribute to the health and well-being of suffering people around the world.*

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.



Congregations celebrate the pivotal events of Christian faith

God expresses his profound passion for us at Calvary

Christians mark significant dates on the church calendar in April — Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. These are pivotal events in the Christian community. About Jesus' death, Paul wrote: "God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). And in a letter to the Corinthian church, he exclaimed: "If Christ has not been raised, then ... your faith has been in vain!" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Congregations hold a variety of services and fellowship gatherings to mark these events. The Palm/Passion Sunday morning service in one of the congregations where I am the minister is called *The Road to Calvary*. While the congregation sings the first hymn, people playing the roles of Jesus and the disciples move through the church with the younger children waving palm branches they have made. Then the choir sings the well-known anthem *The Holy City*. The service continues with readings and dramatizations of some of the Holy Week events. For example, the narrator reads passages from the Gospels that include Jesus speaking of his approaching death and telling a parable in the temple. Several folk portray such scenes as the cleansing of the temple, Jesus washing the disciples' feet, the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus' prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane, the betrayal by Judas, the trial before the council and Pilate, and Peter's denial of Jesus. The congregation plays the role of the crowd, shouting "Crucify him! Crucify him!" during the trial before Pilate.

Throughout the service, a very large cross is borne along the centre aisle by a



Services and events help the church focus on the mystery of the saving death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus

tall person dressed in the same type of clothing as the person playing the role of Jesus. He moves a short distance after each scene, eventually placing the cross on the chancel stairs. There are 12 sections in the service, and a candle is extinguished at the end of each section. As the service progresses, the congregation sings well-known hymns and a haunting flute and organ duet is played. After the person playing the role of Jesus speaks the Seven

Words From the Cross through the public address system, there is a time of silence before the service concludes. This is a very moving service.

Holy Week services, Maundy Thursday meals, celebrations of the sacraments, outdoor services at sunrise, musical presentations — these and other events and services help the church to focus on the mystery of the saving death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus.

In the face of this rich mystery, two stories are instructive for me. One is told in the second book of Samuel. Three soldiers hear King David muttering to himself about his longing for a drink of water from the well in his hometown of Bethlehem. Since this town is behind enemy lines, his dream seems impossible to be fulfilled. Yet these three soldiers slip quietly through the enemy lines, secure water from the well and bring it to the king! He is astonished by their intense loyalty and heroic deed. The action of these soldiers provides me with a sense of the magnificent care and profound passion God has for us — a care and passion expressed in Christ's death at Calvary.

The other story is one I received from the late Rev. Dr. Lloyd MacLellan. In a Sunday morning sermon, a French bishop told the congregation about three lads who were walking past a church on Good Friday many years earlier. As folk were leaving the church after a service, two of the boys dared the third to go to the church door and tell the officiating minister that this "church thing" was a lot of nonsense. The minister listened to the young man and then made one request. Go to the front of the church,

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stand before the cross and say, "Jesus died for me, and I couldn't care less!" The boy readily complied. As he was about to leave, the minister asked him if he would do this one more time. The boy shrugged his shoulders and said "Sure!" When he was about to leave the church to join his friends, the minister asked him if he would be willing to go once again to the front of the church and say before the cross, "Jesus died for me, and I couldn't care less!" Impatiently, the lad agreed. However, when he began to speak, he was unable to finish the sentence. He broke down and wept. The bishop paused in his telling of this story and declared to the congregation, "I was that lad."

This transforming power of God brought Thomas through the cloud of doubt to the light of faith. It brought Peter from his sense of failure after he denied knowing Jesus to playing a significant role in the life of the early church. It brought Paul from opposing the Christian faith to being its primary missionary. It brought Mary Magdalene from her fear and grief after Christ's death to joy and peace in the presence of the Risen Jesus. And that transforming power of the Risen Saviour is still changing lives today.

May God grant you grace and peace during these days in your pilgrimage of faith.

Sandy McDonald

Moderator's itinerary

April 18

Summerside, P.E.I.

April 23-27

Clerks consultation,
Mississauga, Ont.

April 24-25

160th anniversary
Knox, North Easthope, Ont.

April 30 — May 2

Thunder Bay, Ont.

May 2 (morning)

St. Andrew's, Thunder Bay, Ont.

May 4 (morning)

First, Regina

May 5 (evening)

Forbes, Grande Prairie, Alta.

Christian educators recognize two Presbyterians

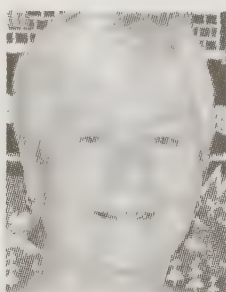
Rev. Anne Yee Hibbs, area educational consultant for the Synod/Synodical of Southwestern Ontario, was installed as president-elect of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators at the group's January meeting in Norfolk, Va. Ms. Hibbs, who says she is "deeply humbled" by the recognition, will begin her one-year term at APCE's annual meeting in February 2005 in Vancouver.

Also at the Vancouver meeting, Dorothy Henderson, associate secretary, Education for Discipleship, Life and Mission Agency, will be recognized as Educator of the Year for 2005. Ms. Henderson says she was speechless upon learning about the award, adding that the past winners "have always been amazing role models" for her.

The APCE describes itself as "a professional organization concerned with the advancement of education in the church, committed to the ongoing witness of our faith in the gospel." The association is a partner of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Reformed Church of America and the Christian Reformed Church and has about 1,800 members from Canada and the United States.



Rev. Anne Yee Hibbs



Dorothy Henderson

Photo by Ian MacCreedy

New faces at 50 Wynford



Alexis Dimson has joined the staff of the Women's Missionary Society as programming and marketing coordinator. Alexis is a graduate of York University, Toronto, and most recently of Centennial College, Toronto, in corporate communication. She is no stranger to the maze that is 50 Wynford, having served her student placement with Resource Production and Communication and worked on a contract basis with the Archives and Records Office. Alexis is a member of

St. Stephen's Church, Scarborough, Ont.

Cassandra Elizabeth Walmsley has joined the family of **Joe and Patti Walmsley**. Joe, building manager of 50 Wynford, and Patti, who formerly worked at church offices in Pensions and Benefits, adopted three-year-old Cassandra in January.



Ecumenical delegation heads to Middle East

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, a coalition of Canadian churches and church agencies, is taking a delegation to Israel, Syria and Lebanon, March 11 to 25, to visit churches, refugee camps and school campuses and to meet with government officials, religious leaders and humanitarian workers. Along with Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Church leaders will be the *Presbyterian Record's* editor, David Harris.

The trip has several purposes. As a justice organization, KAIROS hopes to further its efforts in bringing about peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It seeks to express solidarity with those who are suffering in the Middle East from violence and conflict and to revitalize and energize KAIROS's work there. It also hopes to increase media coverage of the human rights problems in the Middle East and to heighten awareness and education of the area.

Political turmoil in the region dates back to 1948 when the State of Israel was formed over the objections of the Arab states in the region that tried unsuccessfully to destroy the new country. About 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and became refugees. Israel pre-empted another attack in 1967, ultimately occupying land outside its original borders. Fighting has continued ever since — mainly in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. House demolitions, damage to property, land confiscations and restriction of movement and water use are common. Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis are also regular occurrences.

KAIROS was formed in 2001 and has been working on eradicating injustices and restrictions on civil liberties in Canada and elsewhere since Sept. 11 — when suspicions of Arab and Muslim peoples came to a head. KAIROS is comprised of 11 Canadian churches and religious organizations, including the Presbyterian Church.

Amy Sedlezky

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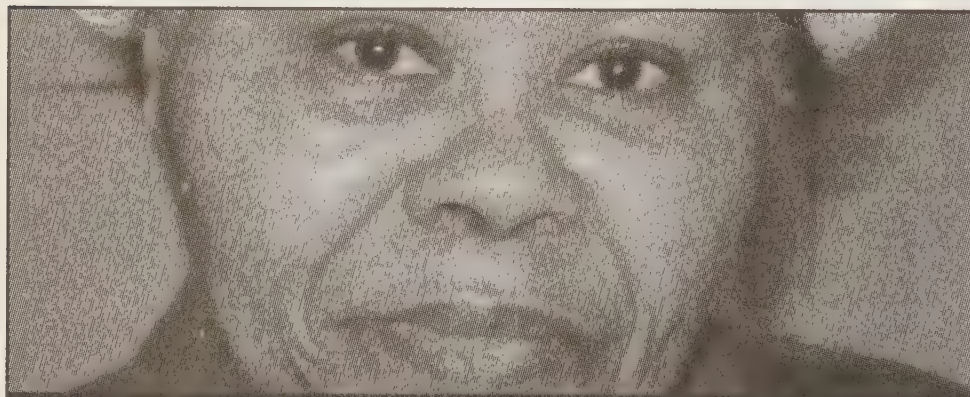
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news briefs

'Endless screaming' forces end to night prayers

NAIROBI — The Presbyterian Church of East Africa has stopped overnight prayer gatherings in its churches in Kenya, saying the loud music and singing is bothering citizens. "All disturbing noises in the name of religion should stop," said the church's Moderator, Rev. David Githii.

The prayer gatherings, known locally as Keshas, are popular with young people and are held in churches belonging to various denominations. But they have come under heavy criticism because of the loud music, drumming and singing that characterize the meetings. "I believe that even God Almighty cannot be expected to always remain awake listening to the endless screaming," one complainant wrote in a letter to the *Nation* newspaper.

Anglican Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi has, however, distanced himself from the interdiction issued by the Presbyterian Church, saying the prayer gatherings "give an opportunity for praise, adoration, thanksgiving and confessions. We still need them," Mr. Nzimbi said, "but we need to address the disturbances they cause."

Francis Ayieko, editor of *EndTime News*, a monthly Christian newspaper, warned the ban would be counterproductive. "Looking at the trend of church growth in Kenya, especially among the evangelicals, night prayer meetings seem to be a permanent feature in churches." He acknowledged rumours that the prayer sessions are sometimes the reason for many broken homes, especially where one spouse takes part in them and the other does not.

Rev. Emmanuel Ngugi of the Roman Catholic diocese of Nairobi said the prayer services have been a good tradition for the church, but their freedom has been abused over time. "We need to check it, with a view to correcting it soon," he said. *ENI*



From Nov. 28 – Dec. 10, reporter Amy Sedlezky went on a food study tour with 11 other Canadians in northern Ethiopia to document the relief work of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank there. This is the second part of her experience as she travelled more than 2,000 kilometres through the countryside.

Daily life a struggle but hope and resiliency remain

by Amy Sedlezky

To visit Ethiopia is to step back in time. Relatively untouched by modern conveniences — except in large cities where high-rises, government buildings and universities mingle with the shanties of the poor — most Ethiopians live as people did 3,000 years ago. According to legend, the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon in Jerusalem and bore a son, who brought the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia and became king. Christianity later took hold and flourished. These deep Christian roots still exert a powerful influence.

November 28, 2003 — After a full day and night of air travel, our plane lands in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, home to two million people. The airport parking lot is my first taste of harsh Ethiopian reality. My food study tour group with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is met by young, thin children dressed in rags and begging for money. Their large, round eyes stare at us longingly as they try to convince us to hand over some money. We'd been warned about this, but it is more harrowing than I'd anticipated.

November 29 — I awake at 5 a.m. to the sound of chanting and the call to prayer coming from an Ethiopian Orthodox church. Outside our hotel window, trees are in full bloom, bursting with pink, red and violet flowers. Birds herald the new morning, and the air's sweet, dewy scent is blissful.

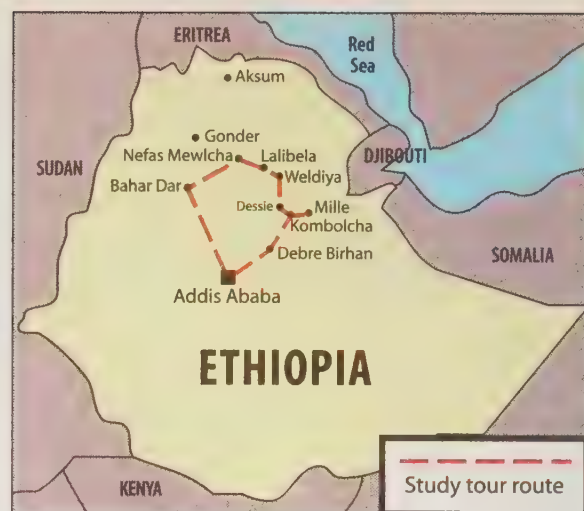
On our first full day in Ethiopia, we tour Addis Ababa, visiting churches, museums and fantastic lookouts. Mount Entoto, for example, is the city's highest point at 2,444 metres above sea level. The view — smaller mountain peaks below, green fields and lush trees — suggests a fertile country. But continual drought, soil erosion and over-worked land make it impossible for Ethiopia to feed all its citizens.

Although the country is still a hierarchical society with upper classes and a privileged few, most Ethiopians struggle to meet their daily needs. Rows of shacks and shanties line the roadsides. Rusted tin roofs, old doors and rickety fencing litter the landscape while livestock and stray dogs loiter in yards. Men talk in groups, and women and children walk slowly along the road, stooping forward to ease the heavy burdens of firewood or water jugs strapped to their backs. The sight is so desperate I can barely stand to look.

November 30 — We're heading toward Kombolcha, 240 kilometres north of the capital and a full day's drive. The countryside stretches out before us, beautiful and ready for harvesting. Small, round homes with thatched roofs and dung walls dot the landscape, reminding me of a storybook scene. I notice the countryside has no fencing and animals of all kinds roam freely, controlled only by their shepherds.

Wherever we stop on our journey, people gather. Some simply look. Some want money or pens. Some ask us about our trip and why we're there. But wherever we go, throngs of people shouting and laughing (especially children) run after our Land Cruisers.

In Ethiopia, work is done by anyone who can manage. Here, a 102-year-old woman seeds peppers in Debre Sina.



December 1 — Today is hot — it must be 35 C — and tiring. We drive out to the desert of the Afar region. Northeast of Kombolcha, in a town called Mille, we visit a water diversion project managed by the Lutheran World Federation. The water project benefits the nomadic Afar people. With skin as dark as unsweetened chocolate protecting them from the scorching sun, they live even more primitively than people we've already met. Their homes are crude and simple. The women walk topless. Their demeanour is cool and hesitant. I feel less than welcome for the first time.

Back in Kombolcha, some of us head into town after dinner. One of our Ethiopian drivers, Mahaley Timket, acts as our interpreter. We hear singing and soon learn it comes from a concert promoting AIDS awareness. We're quickly ushered to the front row. After I get over my initial discomfort of being one of only a few women in a sea of Muslim men, I'm soon put at ease by the friendliness of everyone. When Mahaley explains who we are and that we're there to learn about the struggles Ethiopians have, local reporters covering the concert take our picture and ask us what we think of Ethiopia and the AIDS problem. As we leave, people stretch out their hands or pat us on the back. Our unearned celebrity feels odd.

December 2 — On our way farther north to Dessie, I mention that I'd like to see inside a thatched-roof house. Mahaley immediately pulls over, approaches a home and asks if we can go inside. The residents seem overjoyed. About 12 people come out to greet us. An old woman, almost 100, motions me to come close as her sight and hearing are starting to fail. So far, I've met two women around 100 — remarkable considering the median age of Ethiopian women is only 17 and the expected lifespan is a mere 42 years.

A young woman invites us into the old woman's home. There is one door and, as we enter, we see a dark, round room with a dirt floor and bare walls.

The bed is small and rectangular, made of wood and covered with animal skins. Pots and jugs for cooking potatoes and *injera* — a spongy flat bread made from teff flour and the staple food in Ethiopia — are piled neatly on the floor.

Everyone is excited to pose for pictures. They enjoy looking at the digital screen to catch a rare glimpse of themselves.

December 3 — We're off to Weldiya today. On our drive, we stop to watch some harvesting. As in other places, children immediately gather around us. We're beside a school with 800 students in grades 1 to 6. The old, overcrowded building has about 10 classrooms and only 12 teachers. The director tells us the school badly needs renovations and supplies.

In Weldiya, we're overwhelmed again. Crowds

of people want to know where we are from and what we're doing in Ethiopia. One 14-year-old boy in a school uniform asks me what Canada is like, what kind of food we eat and what I think of Ethiopia. As he walks beside me, he is acutely inquisitive and his eyes sparkle with life.

In the evening, four of us head off to a local bar or *tej bet* to see what the nightlife is like. The tiny room, painted in bright blue and green, has four tables and a bar on one side. Strings of Christmas lights hang down from the ceiling. When the music on the radio stops, a young couple emerges from the backroom. The man is called an *azmari* — much like a town minstrel — and plays an ancient one-stringed instrument. The woman sings in Amharic, the official Ethiopian language. At one point, she sings directly to Mahaley, commenting

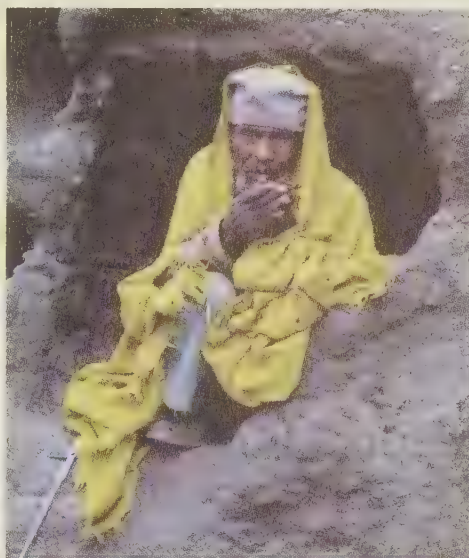
All photos
by Amy Sedlezky

Legend comes to life in Lalibela

The importance of faith in Ethiopian culture becomes clear when walking through the 13th-century, rock-hewn churches in the historic city of Lalibela. Eleven churches — carved out of the mountainside by 60,000 stonemasons over 23 years — are still used today for prayer and religious services. The city was named for the country's beloved ruler, King Lalibela (whose name means, the bees recognize his sovereignty), who commissioned the churches. Built as a New Jerusalem, the city and its churches have drawn countless pilgrims throughout the centuries. Even today, 30,000 to 40,000 people make the journey to Lalibela every Christmas.

Before building the churches, King Lalibela spent 25 years in Jerusalem — a pilgrimage he believed would ensure his place in Heaven. But when Muslim-Christian wars broke out, the king sought an alternative to Jerusalem for his people, who risked being killed were they to journey there. Following what he believed were God's instructions, King Lalibela set out to build Ethiopia's own Jerusalem, which is supposed to guarantee eternal salvation to those who visit.

The churches in Lalibela were built to exacting standards — with perfectly placed pillars, exquisitely rounded ceilings, ancient murals and mosaics, and carvings and monuments symbolizing biblical stories. All the churches have three doors — separate entrances for priests, men and women. The



In Lalibela, priests and monks crouch in holes carved into the mountainside to read Scripture and pray.

House of Golgotha, commemorating the place of Jesus' crucifixion and containing a replica of Adam's tomb, is deemed the holiest of the 11 churches. Merely stepping inside is said to secure a spot in Heaven. Women are prohibited from entering this holy place.

Legend and superstition live on in Lalibela's churches. The House of Libanos was allegedly built in 24 hours with the help of angels. The Houses of Gabriel and Raphael contain a precarious ledge called the Stairway to Heaven, which pilgrims ascend to test their holiness. If they are righteous, they will make it all the way up; if not, they will

fall to their deaths. The House of Demetrios has a long, dark tunnel that monks walk through without a torch to get an idea of what Hell might be like. Emerging from the tunnel into the bright light makes pilgrims feel as though they are entering Paradise.

Faith informs daily life for Ethiopians, who fast every Wednesday and Friday as well as the 55 days leading up to Fasika (Orthodox Easter) in March and April, when no animal products are consumed. Attending church every weekend is of utmost importance, where priests use the ancient Ge'ez language even though it is not understood by the general public. References to God are made in daily speech, including the Amharic words for "hello," "how are you" and "thank you" — all variations of "God bless you" or "God will reward you."

In the midst of this world of ritual and tradition, the poverty-stricken and starving people of Lalibela line the outside of the churches, begging for money. The elderly, dressed in tattered clothing, sit crumpled on the ground. Young women nursing newborns gaze sorrowfully at tourists, stretching out a hand for any kind of offering. Monks sit in small holes carved into the rock face, reading from Scripture. Other locals gather outside, praying and chanting. Meanwhile, the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church lives in an elaborate mansion in Addis Ababa.

— Amy Sedlezky

on the company he's keeping. Our driver blushes, and the bar fills with laughter.

December 4 — We visit more Lutheran World Federation water projects today. These are already benefiting the farmers who talk with us about how their crops have increased since having access to more water. LWF also works on community development and education. One woman speaks openly about how her role as a woman has changed from five years ago. Work is now divided more equally, she says. She also has access to birth control and is more involved in family decisions.

The Canadian farmers in the tour group speak to the Ethiopians about how drought has affected Alberta crops in recent years. This common understanding seems to signal an unspoken bond — when survival is precarious, we all suffer regardless of race, creed, income, education level or nationality.

I'm beginning to love Ethiopia.

December 5 — We're headed toward Lalibela, where the famous 13th-century rock-hewn churches stand 2,630 metres above sea level in the Lasta Mountains. On the way, we stop to peek inside a country home made of stone. It is dark and smoke-filled, with a small flame burning in a pit on the floor. Empty chicken coops are perched on top of a platform and supplies of all kinds are piled in separate areas. Outside, a small tower of sun-dried dung patties — flattened by hand — are stacked, ready to be used for fuel. As we're wandering around the yard, one of the local men brings in some wheat from the field. It's nothing but straw — there's no grain in the husk. The harvest will be poor, he

explains, and they may not have enough to eat.

We are about to leave when an older man offers us milk. "It isn't much," he says, "but it's all I have to give." We decline, but I'm awestruck by this man's generosity. He has almost nothing and, yet, he's offering us a gift. This spirit of giving and graciousness is a common experience in Ethiopia. I find it uplifting and refreshing.

December 6 — The begging children in Lalibela almost break my heart. A young boy, to whom I gave one birr (about 15 cents) yesterday and a pen today, meets me at our vehicle just before we leave and tells me he has no lunch and no money. His dark brown eyes are pleading with me as he places his small hands against the car window.

December 7 and 8 — Farther north in Nefas Mewlcha, we are visiting the Food for the Hungry International base camp. Facilities are basic here. The bathroom is a hole in the ground. There are no mirrors. Electricity is only turned on from sundown until bedtime. There's one shower, and hot water is a recently installed luxury. However, what they lack in accommodations, the staff make up for as hosts. These Evangelical Christians (a minority in this country) exude the light and grace of God. They are soft-spoken, kind and humble.

While visiting some local people who benefit from FHI projects, we're invited to a farmer's home. "It's not far," they tell us. "It's just over there." We look down the mountain to a tiny rooftop. To these men who walk great distances daily, it's a short jaunt; but to lazy North Americans, just over there is actually way, way over there.

In Weldiya, the main street is lined with homes and shops, often with dirt floors and no electricity. However, tourists can easily find hand-woven scarves and shawls, silver jewellery and leather goods.



Ancient country has proud past

Once known as the breadbasket of the ancient world, Ethiopia's journey to becoming the international face of poverty is long and complex. Situated in the Horn of Africa, the country has withstood war, imperial dynasties, drought and a Communist government to emerge a free and proud nation. Ethiopia's flag is a clue to its rich history and culture: the top band of green represents fertile land, yellow is for religious hope and red pays tribute to the blood of its people. "Their history isn't collecting dust," says Sam Vander Ende, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank regional representative for Africa. "It's very much a part of who they are today — and it informs their pride."

Home to the 3.2-million-year-old remains of the hominid Lucy, Ethiopia was the second country in the West (after Armenia) to adopt Christianity, sometime in the fourth century. Also known as Abyssinia (an ancient empire in northeastern Africa encompassing Ethiopia, Eritrea and southern Yemen), Ethiopia is one of only a few African countries that has protected its independence for most of its history.

Visiting Ethiopia is like stepping back in time. Farming is done by hand, and nomadic tribes wander the land searching for food and water for their animals. Even Orthodox religious services adhere to the way people worshipped almost 2,000 years ago in the Aksum dynasty, one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient world in which Christianity was planted and grew.

The Aksum dynasty began its demise in the 12th century, due in part to the spread of Islam and the rise in power of Arab interests. Muslim-Christian wars occurred in the 16th century, and the bloody battles left the Ethiopian empire on shaky ground. In 1636, a new dynasty began in the city of Gondar and thrived for the next 200 years. It is nestled beside Lake Tana, whose islands are rumoured to have held the Ark of the Covenant.

In the late 1800s, a new emperor was crowned. With dreams of modernizing and unifying his country, Emperor Menelik moved Ethiopia's capital to the centrally located Addis Ababa. He led the defeat of Italian forces when Italy tried to expand its rule into Ethiopia from its foothold in present-day Eritrea. The outcome of the Battle of



The overthrow of the Derg regime — the Communist government that ruled Ethiopia between 1975 and 1991 — is proudly commemorated throughout the country. Outside Dessie, tanks are left on the roadside to remind citizens of the victory.

Adwa in 1896 shocked the international world. The victory stood Menelik in good stead, and Ethiopia became an example of independence in an Africa dominated by European colonialism.

Emperor Haile Selassie (Power of the Trinity, in Amharic) came to power in 1930 and manoeuvred Ethiopia into the League of Nations. The emperor was granted near-absolute power and he operated under the

'Their history isn't collecting dust. It's very much a part of who they are today — and it informs their pride'

guise of a parliament and senate, whose members were plucked from among nobles and wealthy landowners. Called Ras Tafari (Prince of Peace, in Amharic) as crown prince 1916-1928, the new emperor found a following in Jamaica. Latching onto Ethiopia's independence and the belief that Selassie fulfilled biblical prophecy, Jamaicans created a new religion, Rastafarianism, with Haile Selassie as its divine head.

Sandwiched between Italian-ruled Eritrea and Somalia, Ethiopia was a prime candidate for takeover in 1922. Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and, by 1936, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia became Africa Orientale Italiana.

The Italian reign, however, was short-lived. When the Second World War began, Britain was eager to defeat its Italian enemy and gained new interest in Ethiopia, close to the British colonies of Sudan and India. Britain stepped in and secured Addis Ababa

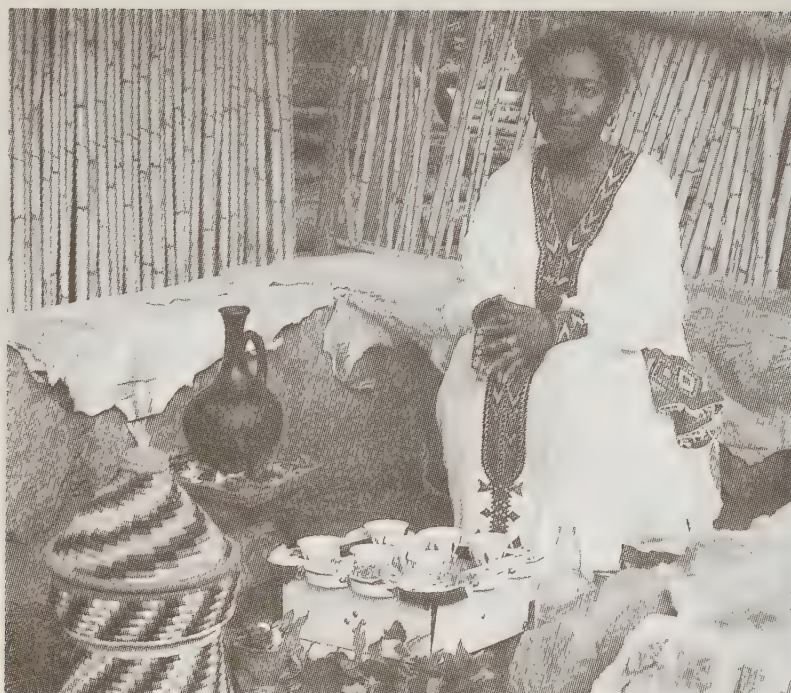
for Ethiopia. Emperor Selassie, who had fled the country, returned triumphantly to lead one of the attacks on the capital. He was restored to the throne in 1941.

Over the years, discontent grew with Selassie's autocratic rule and, in 1975, the emperor fell to the Derg — a radical opposition group led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. The imperial period of Ethiopia had come to a close and, in its place, was a military government with communist tendencies. Businesses were nationalized, and all land became owned by the government — a stipulation that exists today.

Following the infamous drought in 1984-1985, when millions were without food and hundreds of thousands died, Mengistu's favour waned and he fled the country in 1991. Four years later, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was created, and the country's current prime minister, Meles Zenawi, was elected.

Ethiopia seems unable to enjoy peace for long. A border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea is ongoing. Rivalries began in the 1950s, and war broke out a decade later and continued for 30 years. The Struggle for Freedom claimed 65,000 lives and exiled thousands more. Fighting renewed in 1998 and continued until June 2000. In December of that year, a United Nations peace agreement was signed, but problems reignited in 2003. It is hoped the feuding sides will reach a permanent agreement soon as both countries face serious humanitarian issues that will be difficult to remedy if time and resources are spent on war rather than on basic survival.

— Amy Sedlezky



At the coffee ceremony, family life, neighbourhood news and community events are discussed.

Ethiopian coffee captivates a Canadian

There is always coffee to be had in Ethiopia. Named for the Kaffa region where it is believed the bean originated, coffee is an integral part of Ethiopian culture. It is also Ethiopia's most important commodity, with \$270 million US worth exported in 2000-2001.

Traditionally served in elaborate ceremonies that take several hours, coffee is a symbol of hospitality, respect and friendship. Even when unaccompanied by a ceremony, coffee — black with sufficient sugar or as a *macchiato* with a dash of steamed milk (a reminder of the Italian influence during the occupation in the 1930s) — came on the heels of every meal we ate during my two-week visit to Ethiopia.

The most memorable coffee ceremony for me was in the ancient Christian city of Lalibela in Ethiopia's northern highlands. Our tour group sat on low, hide-covered benches under a canopy to watch the detailed preparation. Long strands of grass (*goozgauz* in Amharic) were scattered on the ground. The woman hosting us sat on a small stool and sprinkled frankincense over hot coals. As the heady scent wafted around us, she ground freshly roasted beans with a mortar and pestle. Spooning them into a black clay carafe (*jebena*), our host added water, placed it on hot coals to boil and served sweetened popcorn to cleanse the palate. When the coffee was ready, she placed small, well-used china cups (*sini*) in rows on a tray and filled them in succession. She added sugar to the rich, dark liquid and passed the cups around.

The strong, bold flavour warmed my stomach and charmed my taste buds. We stayed for a second round, listening to the traditional music playing in the background. Locals sat at other tables, talking and laughing and watching their visitors. As the sun set, the blue-grey sky brought a fresh chill to the air — a common occurrence in Ethiopia, where days are hot but nights bring cool relief. I hoped to stay for a third cup of the exotic elixir, but the setting sun signalled our return to the hotel. Coffee in Canada will never be the same!

— Amy Sedlezky

Nevertheless, we set out on the rocky, downhill journey, fighting to catch our breath at such a high altitude. Almost an hour later, we arrive to a group of people waiting to welcome us. They lead us into a newly built home. Its wooden walls are still partially exposed, not yet completely covered by the dung, mud and straw mixture that will soon insulate it. Benches covered with animal skins line the outer walls of the large room, and the floor is covered with sweet-smelling grass. Pots and handi-crafts hang on the walls.

We are offered huge glasses of milk in cups made from animal horns. The milk is sour, like yogurt, and it has the faint taste of smoke. Fresh honey along with *injera* and sauce with boiled eggs are served on a colourful, woven platter called a *mesob*. It's a feast fit for royalty.

December 9 — The trip is drawing to a close.

Our last journey is to the Blue Nile in Bahar Dar, a large city that is more financially secure than others we've seen and home to several large universities. Lots of well-dressed youth walk the clean, palm-lined streets. The traffic lights and paved roads are unsettling after days of simpler surroundings.

December 11 — I'm home. And I'm tired. Addis Ababa to Cairo. Cairo to Frankfurt. Frankfurt to Toronto.

I was in Ethiopia for only two weeks, but it seems odd to return to my privileged Canadian lifestyle. I learned to enjoy the simple Ethiopian way of life. I got used to the bumpy roads, meagre accommodations, dung huts, rugged landscape and the livestock running loose in the streets. The busyness of the Canadian Christmas season now feels foreign.

The Bible comes to life in rural Ethiopia. Sandal-footed people walk everywhere. They tend their flocks. They harvest by hand. They use fire to cook and for heat. They carry the sick and dying to rudimentary clinics miles away. Christian women cover their heads with fine white cloths. Men use walking sticks to handle rough terrain. They cling to a past steeped in faith and devotion. Their lifestyle is ancient, and the country's politics, economy, religion and hardships are complex. It's a land of hardy and hopeful people struggling to survive — where change is desperately needed but difficult to encourage and create. **R**

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a Christian food aid and development organization owned by 13 denominations, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Although the PCC does not have a direct hand in sending aid to Ethiopia, the work there is supported through donations to Presbyterian World Service & Development. Visit www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/ for more information.

Ottawa seeks to appeal full liability for residential school abuse

by Amy Sedlezky

The federal government is seeking to appeal the British Columbia Court of Appeal's December 2003 decision to the Supreme Court of Canada, disputing the decision to hold the government 100 per cent accountable for abuse suffered by aboriginal students at the Alberni Indian Residential School.

Led by Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General, the federal government's position is that the 2003 decision failed to adequately determine whether the United Church was also liable. According to general spokeswoman Nicole Dauz, the church's status as a non-profit organization should not release it from financial responsibility for events that occurred in a facility run by both the church and the government. "We certainly see it as a joint venture," said Ms. Dauz. "It was a partnership."

The Blackwater trial — a case originally launched in 1996 — saw 27 plaintiffs file suit against the Government of Canada and The United Church of Canada. Twenty plaintiffs settled out of court, while the remaining seven went before a judge. British Columbia Supreme Court Chief Justice Donald Brenner handed down a decision in 1998, saying both parties were vicariously liable for abuse suffered at Alberni at the hands of dormitory supervisor Arthur Henry Plint. The federal government was instructed to pay 75 per cent of compensation and the church, 25 per cent. In June 1998, the United Church appealed the ruling and, in December 2003, the British Columbia of Appeal overturned the lower court decision. Because the appeal court ruling was unanimous, there is no automatic appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Ms. Dauz said this kind of decision has broad implications for non-profit organ-

izations and the responsibilities they have for their employees. A 1999 Supreme Court decision in the Children's Foundation case ruled — for the first time — that the non-profit organization (which operated residential care facilities for emotionally troubled children) was vicariously liable for the abuse of a child by its employee. Ignoring this decision runs the risk of releasing other non-profit organizations

Current agreements between the government and The Presbyterian Church in Canada will remain the same

from injustices perpetrated by their employees. "They were quite adamant about it, saying if non-profit organizations weren't liable, they would have no reason to implement strict guidelines or rules for behaviour," said Ms. Dauz.

An uncertainty surrounding the decision is how the final ruling will translate to other churches in similar situations. "The critical factor the appellate judges were looking at was if the employees were employees of the church or the government, and they found the government was responsible because it funded and established the schools, and set policies, employment regulations and protocols," said Rev. James Scott, the United Church's general council officer, Residential Schools Steering Committee. "So to the extent they have found that to be valid, it is not particular to the Alberni school. If the Supreme Court upholds this judgment, it will have implications for other churches and claims at other residential schools."

Mr. Scott said, despite the court's ruling that the federal government is 100 per cent financially responsible for

the Alberni case, the church is still associated with the school and, therefore, has a moral responsibility to work toward healing and reconciliation. "We didn't see it as exonerating us," he said.

Although the Supreme Court's ruling may alter the outcome of other cases, current agreements between the government and The Presbyterian Church in Canada will likely remain the same. The Presbyterian Church's agreement allots \$2.1 million to settlements, \$500,000 to implementing settlements in a just and healing manner and \$500,000 to healing and reconciliation programs outside of the settlement agreement. Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk of the Presbyterian Church, said the church is committed to this arrangement. "Regardless of how court decisions play out, my hope and my sense of the Assembly Council's commitment to the legacy of the residential schools is that all funds will remain in place to further our church's ministry of healing and reconciliation with aboriginal peoples."

Settlements will continue through the Alternative Dispute Resolution process that began in November 2003 to speed up the resolution of cases through out-of-court proceedings. "The government is committed to that," said Mr. Kendall. "We're committed to that. It's not a problem for students of Presbyterian schools because they know, if they go through the process today, we have an agreement on how the compensation will be paid."

Mr. Kendall said he will be meeting with church leaders and government officials to determine what interim approach might be taken, as it is unclear whether or not the government will apply the appellate level of the Blackwater appeal to other cases while the decision is outstanding. **R**

Youth raise money to help bring better health care to India

by Tom Dickey

Unless they are involved in the church's study (yes, formerly known as a "mission study") for 2003-2005 or have been reading the *Record* lately (World News, March), many Canadian Presbyterians may not be familiar with the Bhil people of Central India. Yet Presbyterian children and youth are helping to bring better health care to Bhil communities through participation in *Partners: Making Bhil Friends in Central India*.

Billed on its cover as "a mission learning/sharing experience," the study has four objectives: to learn about the life and culture of the Bhil people (pronounced "beel"), to learn about the church's partnership with Bhil Christians, to reflect on the importance of faith and how we live it out in our daily lives and, last but by no means least, the sharing part — to raise money to assist with the cost of training and equipping village health workers for remote Bhil villages.

Last year, the Jobat and Mendha community health programs worked to improve the health of people in 86 villages

Actually, as *Partners* author Anne Saunders points out in the study guide's introduction, Bhil Christians in Central India probably know a lot more about us than we know about them. Canadian Presbyterians have a connection with the Bhil people that dates back more than 100 years. For several decades before becoming part of the Church of North India, Bhil congregations formed a presbytery that was part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Many Canadian Presbyterians have served in the region, among them John and Mary Buchanan, Clarence and Amber Wood, Mary Nicols, Margaret Kennedy, Bill and Lucie Milne, Agnes Hislop and Beatrice Scott. Pauline Brown is currently in India, living in the middle of the recent acts of violence by Hindu extremists against Christians and Muslims in the area.

"It is my prayer," says Ms. Saunders, "that through this study, leaders and young people will not only meet Bhil brothers and sisters but will also rediscover (or discover) through this encounter an urgency and an enthusiasm to live faithfully in their communities." The study guide is certainly set up to be accessible to children and youth. It is short (36 pages — including photos, crafts, maps, resources and recipes) and has a user-friendly and clean design by Tim Faller.



A nurse tends to a Bhil child in India. Training and equipping health care workers is part of the church's *Something Extra* program.

It is the participants' involvement in improving the health of the Bhil people that is, perhaps, having the most significant impact on both sides of the project. In the tribal villages of northern India, people are dying every day of preventable diseases. The land is dry and unforgiving, and life is difficult. Last year, the Jobat and Mendha community health programs continued to expand and to improve the health of people in 86 villages. Health workers are being trained to help villagers receive treatment for common problems such as diarrhea, fever, measles, scabies, sore eyes, night blindness and many other health conditions. The workers are also teaching good nutrition and assisting families to set up fruit and vegetable gardens. More than 1,000 families started home gardens in 2003. Immunization campaigns at local hospitals are greatly improving children's chances of survival. Last year, 1,500 children were immunized in 15 villages, and 114 village health care workers paid more than 3,000 visits to pregnant women, helping in the safe delivery of more than 400 babies. And there is a wonderful side benefit to it all — the village health workers are learning to read and write.

Training and equipping health care workers is part of the church's *Something Extra* program. Donations for this and other projects in India can be made by contacting Presbyterian World Service and Development, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7. Tel: (416) 441-1111 or toll-free 1-800-619-7301. E-mail: pwsd@presbyterian.ca. **R**

African pastor received by Presbytery of Ottawa

The Presbytery of Ottawa marked the reception of Rev. Charles Kahumbu as a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada with a public service last December. Mr. Kahumbu was ordained into the Presbyterian Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) in 1989 and served in pastoral ministry there until 1992. He also served in Zambia until coming to Canada as a refugee in 1995, along with his wife, Leonnie, and their son, Emmanuel.

While adjusting to life in Canada (and completing all required courses), Mr. Kahumbu, who is fluent in French as well as two African languages, has ministered to francophone African refugees in Ottawa. He is currently the leader of the Francophone Mission, a ministry that meets Sunday afternoons at Erskine Church under the auspices of the presbytery. He is the first minister from the Congo Church to be received as a Presbyterian minister in Canada.



Joining Rev. Charles Kahumbu at a public service recognizing his reception into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church were: Peter Winter (left), moderator of the Presbytery of Ottawa; Rev. James T. Hurd, clerk of presbytery; and Rev. Cedric Pettigrew, minister of Erskine Church.

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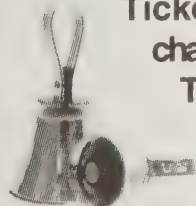
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Convocations

Congram, Klempa to receive degrees

Knox College, Toronto, will hold its 160th convocation on May 12, 2004, at 7:30 p.m., at Convocation Hall, University of Toronto. The guest speaker will be Brian Stewart, journalist and host of the television foreign affairs show *CBC News: World View*, as well as senior correspondent on *The National*. The degree of Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*) will be bestowed on Rev. John Congram, a retired minister, former editor of the *Presbyterian Record* and moderator of the 123rd General Assembly, and on Lois Klempa, a graduate of the (former) Ewart College, Toronto, leader at all levels of the church and co-author of *Certain Women Amazed Us: The Women's Missionary Society, Their Story, 1864-2002*.

Wisse to be named emeritus professor by The Presbyterian College

Prof. Frederik Wisse, retiring member of the college faculty and professor of New Testament in the faculty of religious studies at McGill University, Montreal, will be appointed emeritus professor at the 137th convocation of The Presbyterian College, Montreal, May 13, 2004, at 8 p.m. in The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. He will also be guest speaker. The degree of Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*) will be conferred on Eleanor Knott Crabtree, who served The Presbyterian Church in Canada as a missionary to India, and on Rev. L. George MacDonald, minister of Knox Church, Halifax.

VST to honour authors Cameron, Milton

Stevie Cameron, author, journalist and founder of the Out of the Cold program at St. Andrew's (King Street), Toronto, and Dr. Ralph Milton, a former news broadcaster and United Church administrator, author of nine books and co-founder of Wood Lake Books, will receive Doctor of Divinity degrees (*honoris causa*) at the 33rd convocation of Vancouver School of Theology at St. Mary's Anglican Church, Vancouver, on May 3 at 7 p.m.



Devoted volunteer honoured with award from Governor General

Tanyss Bell Phillips of St. Andrew's Church, Saskatoon, has received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award for her 40 years of volunteer work for the church and her community. She was presented with the award on Jan. 24, 2004, by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson during a four-day visit to Saskatoon.

The Caring Canadian Award was established in 1995 by former governor general Romeo LeBlanc to honour those he called "the unsung heroes of our country." It is intended for individuals whose unpaid, voluntary contributions behind the scenes provide extraordinary care or help to individuals or groups in the community.

A retired economist, Mrs. Phillips has served in numerous volunteer roles with the church. She has been a member of the senate of the University of Saskatchewan, the council of the Canada West Foundation and is currently a member of the Saskatoon branch of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. She was also an active worker for the Salvation Army for 20 years.

PWS Developments

a newsletter of Presbyterian World Service & Development Spring 2004

photo: Bella Lam



Children receiving a meal at the Shauri Yako Centre for Youth.

Hope for Youth

by Bella Lam, PWS&D Program Coordinator

"See you later, Mama Mugo!" the kids shout their goodbyes to the elderly lady who smiles and waves from her front step. Everyone knows that, if you go to Mama Mugo's home, you are not going to walk away hungry.

Shauri Yako is a small rural community located in Nyeri, Kenya, approximately 150 km north of Nairobi. About 75% of the residents in Nyeri live below the poverty line. The district has the highest number of landless people displaced by tribal clashes in Kenya. A lack of farmland and employment opportunities contributes to a perpetual cycle of poverty and despair. The poor economy, coupled with the AIDS pandemic, has resulted in

a large number of orphans and youth who have dropped out of school, are unemployed, and/or are working on the streets. A small group of dedicated people in Shauri Yako are working for these children to have a better future. The leader of this initiative is Anna Nyokabi Karanja, affectionately known to the local people as Mama Mugo.

Many people in Shauri Yako have benefited from the hospitality of Mama Mugo. For years she has given whatever she had to support children living in the slum. She began her work by cooking large meals for dozens of kids who otherwise would not eat.

continued on page 25



Anna Nyokabi Karanja, affectionately known as Mama Mugo, has dedicated her life to meeting the needs of street youth.



Presbyterian World Service & Development

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A Family Struggles with AIDS

by Karen Plater, Resource & Communications Coordinator for PWS&D

Grace Banda is sixteen years old. She lives in a house with mud walls and a ceiling of discarded pieces of cardboard and plastic located in one of the urban slums that surround the city of Blantyre, Malawi. She is working hard to complete her studies in secondary school and dealing with the things that accompany being 16 years old. She is also caring for her mother who is dying of AIDS.

photo: Karen Plater



Grace Banda (far left), her mother (seated centre), her sister Charity (on floor) and brother Felix (far right) with two home-based care volunteers.

The Bandas are one of the families supported by Blantyre Synod's Orphan Family in Crisis program supported by PWS&D. The Synod is supporting families who have lost their parents to AIDS or who are caring for a single sick adult. They are helping Grace with her secondary school fees and providing her family with maize so that she, her mother Rhoda, her brother Felix, and her sister Charity have enough to eat. Volunteers trained by the Synod come and help the children provide basic care for their mother.

Rhoda, thin and frail, explains that her husband died two years ago. He was sick for sometime. She has constant diarrhea and no energy. She tested positive for HIV two months ago.

Rhoda worries about the future for her children. She is grateful that the Synod is helping Grace study, so that she will have more opportunities for her future. She is thankful for the volunteers who help care for her. She wishes that she

had more energy so she could provide for her children, instead of having them care for her.

The Bandas' story can be repeated over and over again as HIV/AIDS continues to spread around the world. UNAIDS has reported that in 2003 the epidemic killed more than three million people and five million more acquired HIV. It is now estimated that between 34 and 46 million people are living with HIV.

The impact of this disease is only beginning to be revealed. In Africa, AIDS has already orphaned more than 11 million children. In addition to the trauma of watching their parents die, many are forced to drop out of school to earn money or care for a sick parent and/or siblings. They struggle to feed themselves and often must sell what-

ever they own in order to survive. These children are vulnerable to the worst forms of child labour.

Confronting AIDS has not been easy for the church. However, as the pandemic continues to devastate families and communities, churches have begun to respond. Education programs are helping people learn how to protect themselves from this deadly disease. Care programs help support those who are dying and the families that are left behind.

PWS&D is standing with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and the Presbyterian Church in East Africa as they struggle to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and to care for those infected, and affected.

Pastors in Kenya Confront AIDS

based on reports from Rick Allen

Pastors in Africa have struggled with confronting the AIDS epidemic. In Kenya, PWS&D is helping The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) equip pastors and lay leaders to teach people how to prevent the transmission of HIV and care for those infected.

Pastor AK, a middle-aged minister in rural Kenya was invited to attend a one-week HIV/AIDS course specifically for pastors. At the end of the course, he indicated that, prior to attending the

course, he was already interested in the HIV/AIDS issue but had been opposed to teaching about condoms. After attending the course, he believed that condom promotion should be a component in HIV/AIDS prevention, along with an emphasis on abstinence and faithfulness.

Pastor TY, an older pastor in an urban area, stated early in the course he had a family member who had died from AIDS. As the course progressed, he revealed that it was his son. Near the

end of the course, Pastor TY confided that his real concern was whether his infant granddaughter was infected. The course taught him how and where he could find out if she was HIV positive.

A year later Pastor TY says that, prior to the course, he was hesitant to talk about HIV/AIDS, but now he openly talks about the issue and feels equipped to give basic correct information on HIV transmission and prevention to members of his congregation and community.

photo: Bella Lam



Left: Youth preparing to play soccer in jerseys donated by local businesses.

Helping Children in Kenya from pg. 23

What started out as one woman's mission for poor children has now developed into a centre for youth run by a non-profit organization called Shauri Yako Community Children and Youth Support.

The Shauri Yako Community Youth Support Centre, located next door to Mama Mugo's home, is run by people who live in the community, many who were helped by Mama Mugo when they were kids. Anthony Mucheru, the Program Coordinator, decided to get involved as a way of giving back to the community where he spent his childhood. As a youngster, he visited Mama Mugo's home many times. It was a place that not only offered much needed nourishment, but also the support lacking at home. Today, Anthony and the centre's other staff are working with the same spirit, providing what they can for kids who have so little.

Each day the centre provides meals for 60 young children. After lunch, many of the children do arts, crafts and other activities organized by the staff. Volunteer counsellors work with the youth to change destructive behaviours and attitudes that come from the combination of high unemployment, hopelessness and boredom. It's a tough job. Many of the youth are engaged in reckless and dangerous activities such as drug use, unsafe sex, and petty crime.

One of the creative ways the centre engages youth is through soccer. Many of the young people lack a sense of

belonging, and the staff has found that organized sports offer opportunities for them to channel their energy.

The staff negotiated with the town mayor to provide a vacant field for practices and games, and convinced local businesses to donate team jerseys. Members of the team feel a sense of pride and belonging whenever they put on their jerseys.

The Shauri Yako staff use the sport as an opportunity to build relationships with the kids and raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. During practices the youth often open up and talk to the counsellors about sensitive issues such as sexuality and substance abuse.

Improving the environment in which these children live is also a focus of the youth centre. In the township of Shauri Yako, the Nyeri River is a place of bustling activity. Many people draw their drinking water from the river and use it to wash their clothes. But the stagnant river is contaminated with plastics, papers and other waste products, and poses a major threat for water-borne diseases in the community.

The Shauri Yako Centre is helping children and youth learn the importance of environmental protection and waste management. They organize regular activities to get the youth to clean up the river, recycle plastics, and compost waste. The compost is used as natural fertilizer to cultivate small vegetable gardens. The centre also harvests rain-

water to provide a source of potable water for the children.

The staff and volunteers of the Shauri Yako Centre are helping children and youth realize their potential. Their goal is to enable these young people to contribute positively to their community. This is done through a holistic approach that addresses the related issues of health, education and the environment.

Today Mama Mugo is too old to cook every day for everyone seeking a meal, but her spirit of giving and her love for the youth in this small rural township are carried on by the Shauri Yako Community Children and Youth Support program. PWS&D is proud to support this grassroots initiative, where a small amount of resources is going a long way toward changing lives.

photo: JF Beauchesne



Above: A young girl at the Shauri Yako Youth Centre.

PWS&D has been helping the Shauri Yako Community Children and Youth Support program since 2001. The grant for 2003 was \$34,600. PWS&D continues to raise funds to support this program.

Kundrathur: A village transformed

by Guy Smagghe, PWS&D Program Coordinator

In December 2003 PWS&D Director Rick Fee and I visited Kundrathur, a small village in southern India, just south of Chennai. The people of Kundrathur wanted to send their greetings to Canada and express their thanks to the people who are helping them transform their community.

PWS&D's partner, The Institute for Development Education (IFDE), "invests in people and not in buildings." They believe in building up people's skills to work together to address social

kids help the younger ones with their work.

A training centre offering typing, basic English, computers and sewing helps prepare youth for the work force. Some go on to study more advanced computer programs, and 70% of those end up finding jobs. In doing so, they bring a steady income to their family, helping pull them out of poverty. These youth would never be able to afford the training offered in other centres in the city.

Small savings groups are helping families break the hold moneylenders, charging exorbitant interest rates, had on them. A group of 20 women learn basic accounting skills, open a bank account, and save small amounts regularly. After six months, they can access government funds to complement their savings. Once the fund is large enough,

they use it in times of crisis or to help start small businesses. Moneylenders don't go to Kundrathur anymore because the people have found other ways to get money when needed.

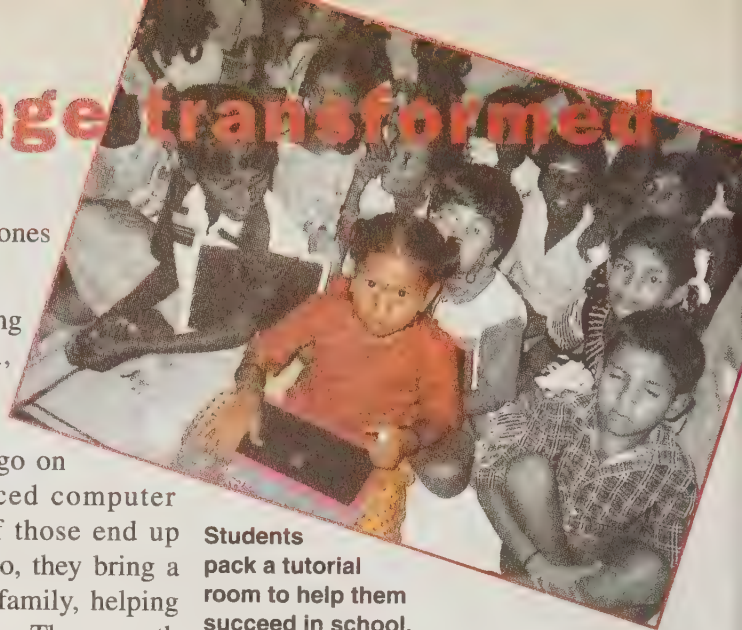
The women have also worked hard to convince local authorities to solve problems in their communities. They managed to get the government to build

Students pack a tutorial room to help them succeed in school.

two public washrooms for women in their villages, a desperate need in a community where most people do not have washrooms in their homes.

Through their regional association, they convinced the government to put gates in a wall that had been built around their slum. The wall was a safety hazard, because people had no way to evacuate the slum in case of fire or cyclone. The women also shut down the production and sale of illicit liquor, which had been destructive for families and posed a health hazard in their community.

Kundrathur is one example of how IFDE has been helping communities tackle the root causes of poverty. IFDE's communities have been so appreciative that they have put their energies towards empowering the people of other villages. In the last three years, the number of villages in this program grew from seven to 32.



A display of products — curry powder, incenses, cleaning products and candles — made by women as income generating projects.



The new public washroom in Kundrathur.

problems. With the support of Canadian Presbyterians, IFDE is helping the people of Kundrathur work together to address challenges in their community.

The women in Kundrathur used to be illiterate. With the help of a teacher supported by IFDE, "life-oriented literacy classes" have helped them learn to read and write. Many testify that their lives have been transformed. Reading signs on buses gives them greater freedom of movement. Basic math skills help ensure they are not cheated when they go to the market. Reading the newspaper makes them more aware of current affairs and opportunities around them.

Children of illiterate parents living in poor villages or slums would have little hope of making it through elementary school without the tutors supported by IFDE. The rooms are always packed with children trying to get the most out of the after-school classes. The older

Food Sent at Critical Time

photo: Callie Long, ACT

Supported by 10 other members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and matching funds from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), PWS&D shipped 8,000 metric tonnes of Canadian wheat worth \$3.6 million US to North Korea in February 2004. The wheat is destined for young children and pregnant and nursing women in four provinces on the east coast of North Korea.

The shipment comes as the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) made a desperate plea for help to feed millions starving in North Korea. "We are scraping the bottom of the barrel," the WFP reported on February 10, 2004. "Over four million core beneficiaries, the most vulnerable elderly, women and children, are now deprived of very vital rations. It is the middle of the harsh Korean winter and they need more food not less."

PWS&D has been the lead agency for CFGB food shipments to North Korea since 1996. In that time, with matching funds from the CIDA, the CFGB has provided over \$37.8 million of food and agriculture aid for North Korea. All of the shipments benefit young children and pregnant and nursing women.

In September 2003, PWS&D shipped wheat flour to produce fortified cereal milk for 833,000 recipients. In August 2002, PWS&D shipped wheat flour worth \$2.2 million which was used with sugar, dry milk, vitamins and minerals provided by WFP and UNICEF to produce fortified biscuits, rice milk blend, corn soya blend and fortified noodles for three million beneficiaries. In September 2002, PWS&D made a further donation of vitamins and minerals worth \$170,000 to support WFP local food production activities. Food shipments are monitored through the Food Aid Liaison Unit (FALU), which works closely with the WFP to ensure that the food distributions complement one another and are distributed to those in need.



A baby in a nursery in North Korea.

One Man's Vision Teaches Children to Hope Again

(based on reports from Thomas van Kampen, ACT)

beginning of the war, he was forced to return to his village and take up farming to support his wife and three children.

Seeing that the war stopped education for many children, Okunabo took the initiative to resuscitate his village's school. "I voluntarily improvised teaching in Batende Primary School, opened by the parents and the local Methodist Church," he says.

The school has grown to 185 students aged six to 15. It now has a headmaster, and Okunabo continues as one of its teachers. The school operates from parents' contributions on a self-help basis.

Okunabo's vision has now become a vision for others. Students who have returned to school in this forgotten part of the world are not only learning to read and write, they are also learning to dream and hope again.

In 2003 PWS&D provided Action by Churches Together (ACT) with \$10,000 for relief work in the Congo. Members of ACT are providing humanitarian assistance in the Oriental Province, including rehabilitating primary schools. Three schools in the Kisangani District have been provided with three classrooms, furniture, teaching material, bicycles for teachers, a latrine block and a functioning water source.



Mr. Okunabo overseeing his class during a test.

Seven years of war have left the Oriental Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo with overwhelming needs: high numbers of malnourished children, inadequate health care and lack of access to education. Here people struggle to rebuild their lives in an environment where needs far outstrip humanitarian assistance. But sometimes the worst of times brings out the best in people. Sometimes all it takes is one person with vision.

Mr. Okunabo lives in the village of Batende. Okunabo was a teacher at a primary public school on the outskirts of Kisangani. When teachers stopped receiving salaries at the



Women in Chongwe singing for the food study tour group.

In February 2004, PWS&D Committee member Mary Jesse saw the impact of food programs in Zambia and Zimbabwe by participating in a Canadian Foodgrains Bank study tour. The following are excerpts from her diary.

Lusaka, Zambia

Today we sit with church leaders from seven denominations who organized and distributed CFGB food aid last year. This is the first time these denominations have worked together on such a large scale, and they share with us the devastating food shortages that brought them together. We hear the challenges of government negotiations, storage and transport, identifying the most vulnerable in each community, and remaining united in their goal to get food and seed to those who needed it most.

As I sit in the hot African sun listening to the story, it is clear that God's hand has guided these faithful people time and time again in the past two years. I wonder what God has in store for my visit here.

Chongwe, Zambia

The village has gathered to greet us. Women sing a song of welcome as we are ushered to places of honour under the shade of a storage shed. Community leaders thank us for food and seed supplied last year. Others share their worry about this year's situation. They can't afford fertilizer for crops. Will the food last until harvest? Will there be enough rain? If there isn't enough food can the Canadians help again?

Our hosts take us to the fields and explain the new farming methods they are using; crop rotation, drought resistant varieties of seed, new vegetables. Later we are served a simple meal in the church sanctuary, a profound act of sharing their most precious resource. We eat carefully so as not to waste a morsel. As we pull away from the vil-

lage, the women sing, "May God go with you."

Macha District, Zambia

We dash into the village *rondavel* (a round hut) as the rain erupts. Forty villagers and 12 Canadians squeeze into the small thatched roof shelter. Cooking pots hang overhead and a small fire burns at our feet. Twenty more children crouch under the overhanging roof, watching us closely.

The village headman begins: "Because Canadians sent food last year, there are many people here to greet you. Otherwise many would have died. People were very weak then, but we are healthier now."

Our group leader, Dan, responds: "Just as we gave you food last year, you have now given us shelter to keep us dry. Together we take care of each other. We are partners." Our hosts smile and prepare a meal for us. They watch anxiously as we taste the cornmeal and sugar dish. We give the "thumbs up" sign. They laugh, and sing us a Zambian song celebrating unity between people. We respond by singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." We are partners!

Gwanda District, Zimbabwe

Today I met Stella and Andrew. Stella's husband died last month of AIDS, and she is HIV-positive. She leads a support group for people living with AIDS, a group she hopes will help her and her three children cope with what lies ahead. When we part, Stella says to me: "I know as Jesus Christ is my Savior that I will live

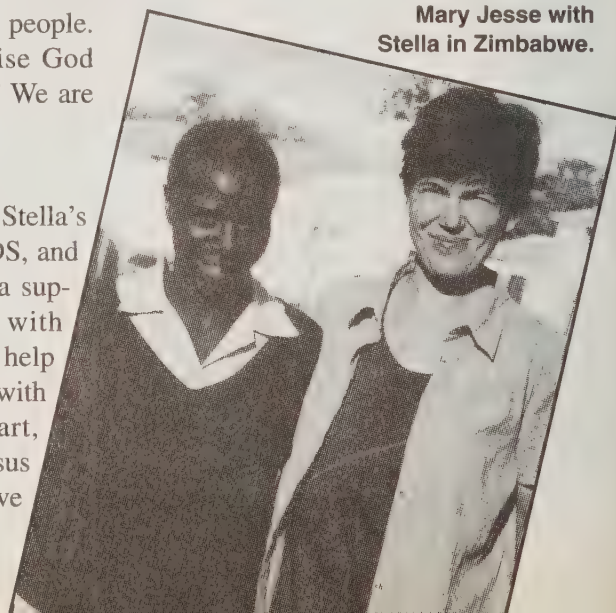
a long life. It [AIDS] is difficult, but I accept it. Please pray for me."

Andrew, too sick to work anymore, tells us the support group has given him courage. "Here I found kind people who tell me I am a person. People die of malaria, people die of AIDS. There is no difference." For two weeks we have travelled and learned about food issues, poverty, partnership, and hope. AIDS has been a constant shadow over all our conversations. Today, it overwhelms me. How can our friends cope with hunger, and political injustice and AIDS? It is so unfair.

Regina, Saskatchewan

I have been home for two weeks now. I can't get back to "normal." Maybe this is what God had in store for me. How will I respond to this food study tour? I think I'll be working that out for a long, long time. In the meantime, I am reminded of the song sung to us by a group of children in a Lusaka day care: "Brother, Sister, I will never forget you, even though you are far, far away."

Mary Jesse with Stella in Zimbabwe.



These charming 10-year-old girls, Baraah, Reem, Hala, Nareman, Osl and Remah, live near Jenin, speak a little English and love to meet people from abroad.

night in the homes of generous Palestinians. We met with Israeli settlers and heard from Israelis seeking peace.

The "security barrier," 27 feet high, was always present, splitting towns in two and disrupting ordinary life. Captured land and demolished houses caused outrage. After seeing the deprivation, we tended to forget about Israel's insecurity, which was still very real.

Everywhere I found humour and the unexpected. On a city bus in Jerusalem, full of the ultra-orthodox, I was amused by the radio playing "Stand By Your Man." I discovered young Bedouin women, in long traditional dresses, wearing sequined designer jeans underneath! I didn't expect the beauty of the landscape. I certainly didn't expect the resilience of the people.

The United Nations accords refugees, driven from their land by war, a right to return to it. Israel was recognized as a state on condition of agreeing to this. Palestinians want an acknowledgement of this as a basis for any negotiation for peace. Israel feels they can't retain a Jewish character to their state if Palestinians outnumber them. Both are afraid to moderate their positions.

While in Israel and Palestine, seeing spirit-filled personality and zest, as well as intractable conflicting "rights," made me realize that here, mercy would mean supporting every instance of compromise and dialogue until an unexpected almost-impossible outcome is reached. A comedy of mercy indeed!



Marching for Peace

by Joan Montgomerie, a member of Calvin Presbyterian Church, Toronto

In Shakespeare's "comedies of mercy," mercy falls, like the gentle rain from Heaven, on good and bad alike. I was seeking mercy when I travelled to Israel and Palestine in December 2003 to participate in the Women's International Human Rights March.

Approximately 90 women signed on to this international event to show solidarity with peace activists in Palestine and Israel. We wanted to commiserate with the people in the West Bank where rights are most obviously violated, and respect Israelis and their desire for security. But it was difficult.

We spent time in the West Bank with the General Union of Palestinian Women and the Coalition of Women for Peace in Israel. In Qalqilya, Tulkaram, Jenin and Hebron, we viewed refugee areas and met activists and officials. We spent the

Aid Saves Lives by Karen Plater

Catherine Shawa is raising five children, ages one to 12, on her own. A difficult job in any environment, it is more difficult in Enkondhlweni, Mphembre, a remote community in northern Malawi.

In October 2002 Ms. Shawa had no food to feed her children. Drought had caused her maize crop to fail, the second failure in two years. Unemployed, with no money to buy food, Shawa and her family found themselves caught in the same food crisis that was threatening the lives of some 12 million people in southern Africa.

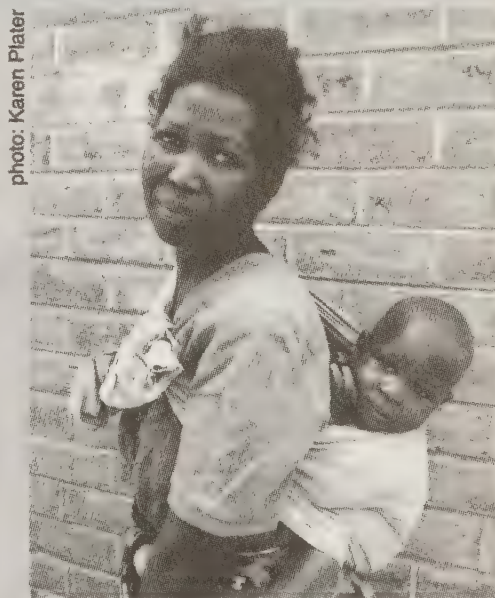
The food crisis in Malawi was not highly publicized in the media. PWS&D issued an appeal in March 2002. Canadian Presbyterians responded, giving over \$255,000.

A long-time partner of the Church of

Central Africa Presbyterian, PWS&D took the lead providing food with the Livingstonia Synod, while Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (USA) took the lead with the Blantyre Synod.

Catherine Shawa was one of the people who benefited. With the support of PWS&D, Livingstonia Synod distributed maize and likuni phala — a special high-protein food supplement for children under five — to 7,600 families in northern Malawi from October 2002 to March 2003. A thousand families in Mphembre received assistance from this distribution. Without the food, Ms. Shawa feels that she and her children would have starved.

PWS&D continues to support food programs in northern Malawi. While the 2003 harvest was better, there were still many areas with food deficits. Helping



Catherine Shawa and her youngest child.

people in Malawi find ways to sustainably improve their agriculture production in the long term continues to be an important part of work supported by PWS&D in Malawi.

Make a Connection: Sponsor a Refugee

10 Reasons for a Church to Sponsor a Refugee

1. Do it because you have been looking for a way to put your faith into action. Jesus called us to serve the least powerful and the poorest in our world.
2. Do it because it will bring your congregation together. You will become closer to one another as you work together in meaningful service.
3. Do it because you are grateful for God's blessing. Be thankful for the strengths of your congregation and community.
4. Do it even if you think you can't afford it. Financial support often follows faith and vision.
5. Do it to refocus your priorities. Come to a new and deeper understanding of the day-to-day realities and priorities of your own life.
6. Do it to bring the world to your doorstep. Experience wonder as a far-off country becomes a real place
7. Do it because there are no strangers in our global village. When a refugee knocks, and we open the door, the door also opens for us. We receive an opportunity to live more faithfully and in closer relationship with God.
8. Do it because you love a challenge. It may change your life, and will certainly change the life of a refugee in need.
9. Do it because no one is a refugee by choice and everyone needs a safe place to live.
10. Do it because you'll have fun!

Olivier Usabuwera became a Canadian citizen on Tuesday, February 3, 2004. Originally from Rwanda, Olivier arrived as a refugee in Canada on February 5, 1997. He and a brother joined his mother, brother and sister already here in Canada.



photo: Richard Fee

Private Sponsorship Program Celebrates 25 Years

You've heard about the sponsorship scandal. Isn't it time for a sponsorship success story? 2004 marks the 25th anniversary of the Private Sponsorship Program in Canada. Over 185,000 refugees were resettled through this program between 1979 and 2003.

This one-of-a-kind program allows ordinary people from across the country to help refugees settle in Canada. Through the private sponsorship program, groups offer additional refugee sponsorships in addition to the thousands of government-sponsored refugees. Private sponsorship taps the energy and resources of ethnic groups, families and faith communities — like Presbyterian congregations.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's involvement in refugee sponsorship began with the overwhelming response to the resettlement of Indo-Chinese refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and continues to the present. Private Sponsorship has been fulfilling for both refugees and congregations. Refugees have started new lives in a new land, and congregations have played a meaningful role in helping refugees become future Canadians.

How Can I Help a Refugee Resettle in Canada?

The PCC is an official Sponsorship Agreement Holder with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This agreement allows Presbyterian congregations to sponsor refugees, either as private sponsors or through the government joint assistance sponsorship program.

Private sponsorship is fully funded and run by congregations. Congregations commit to providing basic financial and logistical support for the refugee for a period of at least 12 months. Local relatives of the refugee may help the congregation provide financial and social supports.

Joint Assistance Sponsorship is fully funded by the government. Congregations provide the logistical support to help the refugee integrate into Canada.

For more information visit www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/refugees or contact PWS&D Refugee Program Coordinator Colleen McCue at cmccue@presbyterian.ca.



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Registration: free

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9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Knox College

A panel discussion with producer Garth Drabinsky and biblical advisors Pat Dutcher-Walls, Peter Richardson, and others.

Registration: \$25 if registered by April 30th
\$35 if registered after April 30th

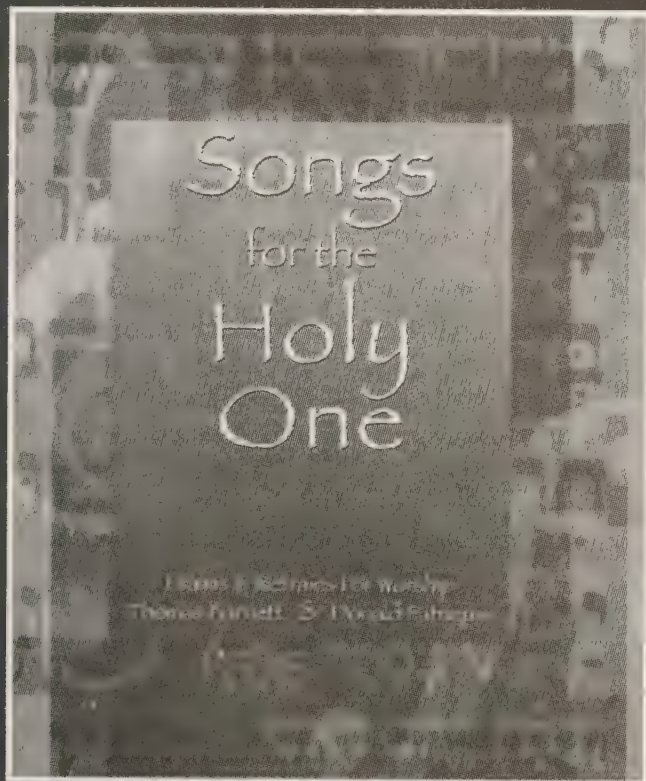
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U.S. Presbyterian minister who performed same-sex marriage has ordination restored

A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) court has ruled that the Presbytery of Cincinnati acted wrongly last summer when it stripped Rev. Stephen Van Kuiken of his ordination for having performed a same-sex marriage in defiance of a direct order. The favourable ruling on Mr. Van Kuiken's appeal restores him to membership in the denomination and to the ministry as an at-large member of the presbytery. It does not affect an agreement he negotiated late last year dissolving his pastoral relationship with Mount Auburn Church in Cincinnati.

After a hearing on Feb. 6, the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Covenant unanimously (9-0) upheld

each of the four arguments Mr. Van Kuiken had made in his appeal, ruling that: the presbytery's action violated a stay of enforcement he had obtained pending his appeal of the judicial commission's prior decision; the presbytery should not have presumed he had renounced the church's jurisdiction without first determining officially that he had performed "a work" disapproved by the *Book of Order*; presbytery officials did not give him proper notice of the commission's decision or consult with him about the potential consequences before expelling him; his performance of a same-sex marriage ceremony was not "a work" as the term is used in the *Book of Order*. That section of the constitution reads: "When a church officer, after consultation and notice, persists in a work

disapproved by the governing body having jurisdiction, the governing body may presume that the officer has renounced the jurisdiction of this church."

Mr. Van Kuiken said that, to a large degree, he feels vindicated by the decision. "The good news is that it allows me to continue, within the system of the Presbyterian Church, to challenge the legitimacy of the Benton decision. He was referring to a 2000 ruling by the judicial commission of the denomination's General Assembly that PCUSA ministers and sessions may not use liturgies for Christian marriage in ceremonies for same-sex couples and should not allow church facilities to be used for same-sex union ceremonies determined to be the same as marriage ceremonies.

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Ethiopian Orthodox Church receives millions to combat AIDS

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is giving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church \$6 million US to assist the church in its fight against HIV/AIDS. Supported by the United States Agency for International Development, the donation will fund a three-year program devoted to education and awareness, promoting abstinence and monogamy, and providing treatment for those already infected.

Ethiopia has the third largest number of HIV-positive people in the world, although exact numbers are difficult to determine in a country where many residents have little knowledge of the disease

**In the midst of poverty,
when people are starving
and frustrated, it is difficult
to worry about AIDS prevention
and birth control**

or are reluctant to get tested for fear of being outcast. Where Ethiopians do know about the disease, it is still stigmatized.

Yohannes Belihu, who coordinates a relief program with Food for the Hungry International, said attitudes are difficult to change. He said he knew of a man who was sick from another ailment and had become terribly thin. When his community learned HIV-positive people are thin, they stoned him, thinking he must be infected.

With approximately 300,000 priests, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has a huge reach in promoting awareness of a disease that has yet to reach its climax. An estimated 2.2 million people are thought to be infected — 90 per cent of those are between the ages of 20 and 49. About 250,000 children under the age of five are thought to carry the disease.

Despite the church's strong influence on its followers, a large percentage of HIV infections are transmitted to married

women by their unfaithful husbands. Consequently, many babies also suffer from the infection. According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 80 per cent of AIDS cases are due to sexual promiscuity. The church is now including messages of abstinence and faithfulness in worship services.

Despite past attempts by the government and humanitarian organizations to educate the population, change has been slow to come. Belachew Tiksie, who coordinates water diversion and community development programs in Ethiopia with the Lutheran World Federation, said long-standing religious taboos often interfere with family planning and other sexual precautions. In the midst of poverty, when people are starving and frustrated, it is difficult to worry about AIDS prevention and birth control, he said.

Moges Mengistu, another program coordinator with LWF, said some communities are making progress. Thanks to LWF's teaching on how to transmit, prevent and protect the spread of HIV and AIDS, he said couples in some villages are being tested before getting married.

In several large cities, including Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, awareness is being promoted by ordinary citizens. Roadside billboards and signs strapped to horse-drawn carts display urgent messages. Admonitions such as "Get Addis Ababa University degree, not an HIV-positive certificate" and "Let's fight AIDS together" are common.

The Canadian government's recent decision to amend patent laws to allow the distribution of inexpensive generic drugs is good news for Ethiopia. Due in part to this amendment and initiatives by numerous other countries, HIV and AIDS treatment medications are now more readily available to sufferers in Africa, where 30 million of the 42 million people infected with HIV worldwide reside.

*Amy Sedlezky, with files from
Ecumenical News International*

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▶ A Ceilidh choir was part of the entertainment at a Scottish night held at Knox, Bobcaygeon, Ont.



▶ A 90th birthday celebration was held for Florence Cox at St Andrew's, Allenford, Ont. Florence, a faithful member of the congregation and a life member of the women's group, is pictured with Rev. Henry Sikkema.



▶ Gordon Caven was honoured on his retirement after 42 years as roll clerk at Albion Gardens Church, Etobicoke, Ont.



▶ Overalls and flannel shirts were the order of the day when Erskine Church, Hamilton, Ont., held a Bluegrass Anniversary Sunday last November. After a worship service that included banjo, fiddle and guitar music, the congregation dined on barbecued ribs, cornbread and other "hillbilly delicacies." Among those enjoying the food were: (L-R) Miriam and John Martens, Russ Mann, Marissa Pfeffer and Joe Tabone.

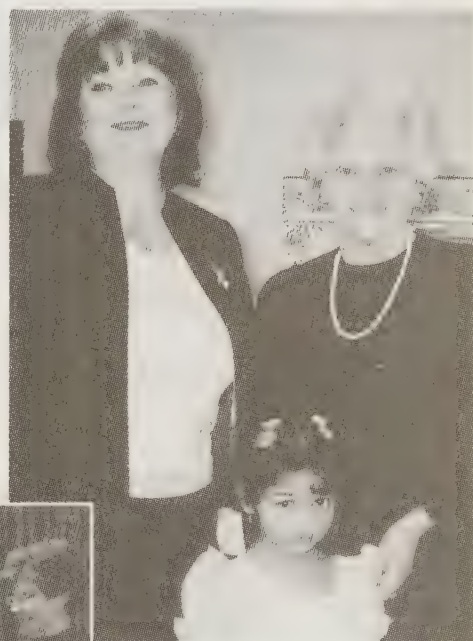
To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Unfortunately, we cannot return any photographs. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

Members of West Vancouver Church display some of the blankets, socks and other items they knit for the local transition house and for children when being transported to a hospital in Portland, Oregon, by the Shriners. Pictured are: (L-R) Anna Brown, Lola Alexander, Paige Elton (at 5, the youngest member of the group), Kay Clark, Anne Vernon, Martann Boucher, Liliass Barr and Sally Brown.



Concerned about the fate of the homeless during the cold winter in Thunder Bay, Ont., the Ladies Aid of Calvin Church decided to make bedrolls for them. The congregation was asked to donate old jeans, blankets and sheets, which were made into layered seven-foot squares. Some of the women also knitted squares from their scrap wool for stuffing but, because most of the squares were too beautiful to be hidden away, they were made into afghans. Altogether, 18 bedrolls, 18 pairs of mittens, 18 toques and six afghans were donated to the Salvation Army for distribution. Pictured with two of the bedrolls are Kaye Whitefield (left), secretary of the Ladies Aid, and Gloria Chesterman, president.

A farewell tea was held for Frances Stewart, a valued member of the senior choir of St. Mark's, Malton, Ont. Pictured with her are elder Dianne Douglas and Christina Rachpaul, the youngest member of the children's choir, who presented Frances with flowers and a book.



Members of Knox, Goderich, Ont., gather to cut fabric for the first of 100 quilts the congregation plans to provide for the new building for Evangel Hall, a Toronto inner-city mission supported by the Presbyterian Church.

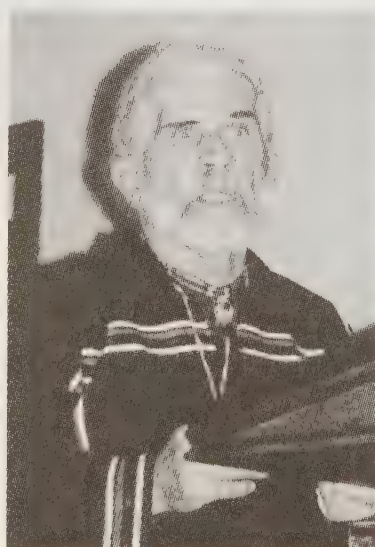
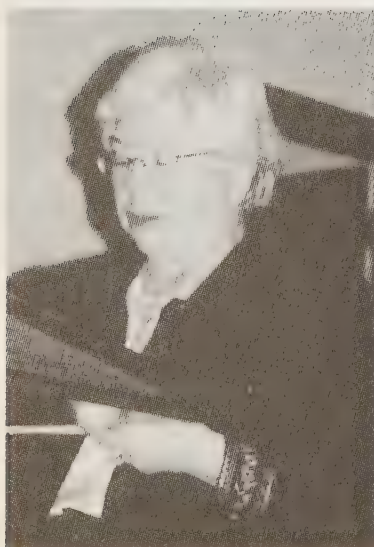
The congregation of St. John's, Cresswell, Ont., celebrated its 109th anniversary with Rev. Hugh Appèl, student minister at St. John's from 1972-1976, as the guest preacher. Among those welcoming Hugh (right) and his wife, Jane (centre), were Cathy Raddatz (left) and Lawrence and Kay Morrison.



A blessing of the fishing fleet service was held at St. George's, River John, N.S. Shown at the ship's wheel is Rev. Jeanette Fleischer with fishers and other clergy from the community.



Theo Black and Rev. Hye-Sook Kam are pictured at Theo's retirement celebration after 42 years as an elder at Maplewood, Chateauguay, Que. He was one of the congregation's original three elders elected in 1961.



Geraldine Robertson and Rev. Matthew Stevens of the Aamjiwnaang First Nations Peoples in Sarnia, Ont., were the guest speakers at a Saturday evening event held by the neighbouring Presbytery of Lambton-West Middlesex at St. Andrew's, Wyoming, Ont. Ms. Robertson spoke of her experience in residential schools and the abuse she suffered. Mr. Stevens talked about justice issues and the myopic perspective toward aboriginal peoples in Canadian history. In response, Stephen Allen, associate secretary for Justice Ministries, Life and Mission Agency, spoke of the challenge to overcome 400 years of painful history — a time that left the aboriginal spirit broken.

pastoral epistles from peter plymley II

Dear Editor:

I see by the Acts and Proceedings of the 129th General Assembly that the communicant membership of The Presbyterian Church in Canada fell by only 2,975 in 2002. Barring any more growth and renewal efforts on a national scale, there may be a slight chance it will level off; but, in the interim, our presbytery has taken some comfort in that it is not alone in decline.

The daring initiative of a think-tank held over an entire half of a presbytery meeting (as reported by your faithful correspondent last month) may not have yielded many immediately useful results, but it set many minds in motion like the quivering of a green Jell-O salad on a wobbly church basement table.

If membership and attendance are problems, then so is money. Beginning at the end with which we are most comfortable, a committee was named to investigate ways in which our struggling congregations might become more cost-effective. In order to keep the ideas fresh and “outside the box,” yet without incurring the expense of an outside consultant (a road travelled too often before), the presbytery and its constituent congregations were asked to submit names of men and women whose careers contributed to making their companies “lean and mean” — number crunchers and efficiency experts bearing assorted titles. Some of the clergy had made their congregations both lean and mean, but not in the precise way we had in mind; so the committee ended up devoid of ministers other than as inside consultants from a distant and non-voting room inside. They did, however, successfully suggest that any references to “lean and mean” be deleted and the words “slender and tender” be substituted.

The first recommendation reflected the absence of clergy in that it proposed there were far too many of them. The problem wasn't that we had too many buildings left over from the era of neigh-

bourhood parishes and walking to church or, if it was, it was intractable since people had a greater attachment to the building than to the resident clergyperson who is generally far more transient and mobile than the pulpit from which he or she preached. The pattern had been to hang on to the building, either selling off or renting bits and pieces of the property, or borrowing heavily against it until its market value was reduced — “to a condominium over an abattoir,” as one committee member put it.

Some of the clergy had made their congregations both lean and mean, but not in the precise way we had in mind

Contracting out and the use of “temps” had proved to be a sound and prosperous development in the business world. Why not pool a few ministers and allow congregations to employ them as needed? Granted, this may mean some inconvenience, since the number of clergy per presbytery would be greatly reduced and the hour of worship on a Sunday might have to move to 7:45 a.m. or 9 p.m.; but there would be a choice of preacher, pro-rated as to value on an open and competitive market. The national church could look after any benefits by way of pension and medical plans, thereby giving them an ongoing but similarly reduced function and saving more money in salaries.

The open market would extend to other clergy functions as well: a good fundraiser could be called in as needed, or someone who gives good funerals and dignified weddings, or one who is a dab hand at counselling and consolation, or an after-dinner speaker for a social, or someone to lead contemporary and/or traditional music in worship.

Some committee members wondered

about the music bit altogether. They had seen the news item in the February issue of this magazine announcing the development and availability of a digital hymn device weighing 1.8 kilograms and capable of producing more than 2,300 hymn tunes in a range of sounds from organ to piccolo. “Up to 10 hymns can be programmed in advance of a worship service. The Digital Hymnal will deal with emergencies in a church service that human organists often face. It can be told to speed up, slow down or add another verse. It

will also change key and tempo without complaint, and add amens if desired.”

Not only the “without complaint” part but also the potential savings in the maintenance of both organ and organist had a great appeal. Of course, the downside was the possible erosion of the choir (frequent attendees and supporters since they have the best seats in the house), and it had to be admitted that not *all* the “emergencies” that a human organist had to face could be met by even a two-microchip digital box, but still ... we must think outside the ... well ... money *is* tight!

So were the lips of quite a few presbyters, although some had caught the spirit and were proposing a presbytery-wide board of repair and custodial experts, a flying squad of Sunday school specialists and a catering firm to handle rummage and roughage as well as crafts and casseroles as the situation demanded.

Yours frugally,



Magnificent messengers arrive with surprise and panache

You do not announce something absolutely grand in a deadpan manner

by David Webber



Last Sunday, winter snapped and lost part of its mind and all of its influence. It was a crazy, out-of-control day at the hand of demented weather. The road to our house is rather long and all downhill. In a normal year (whatever that means), when winter cautiously takes its leave and spring is sprung, the snow gradually melts and flows down our road and out the backside of our property. We keep a little ditch for this annual event and, for a couple of weeks, have Trickle Creek as a delightful added asset to our country home.

This year was different. This year, winter wore out its welcome, lasting at least three weeks longer than usual. It

left all kinds of unwanted deposits on our road, which we lazily drove over rather than wasting energy with a shovel. But the Sunday when winter was finally carted off in a straightjacket and spring had sprung in one day, we reaped the results of our sloth. We came home from church to a roaring river and a constipated ditch. Though we used shovels and pickaxes, we could not effect an enema. Soon a pondage was growing nicely beside our house, with a spillway into our drainage system.

With visions of a flooded basement, we continued to huff and puff but could not break the dam. Finally, in a fit of genius, Linda roared off and came back

with some garden hose. She stuck one end in the bottom of the dam pondage, trailed the other down over the bank toward the lake and, with a few sucks and spits, proceeded to siphon off the new wine of spring — saving our home from becoming an ark or, worse, a submarine. We all stood at ease, leaning on our shovels and pickaxes, imitating a road maintenance crew.

That's when Chelsea saw the robins. There were two of them, perched on a high, rotting snowbank, watching us lean on our shovels. Before I could offer to dig them some ice worms, loud honking came from behind. We ducked as four Canada geese roared overtop of us to

flop onto the icebound lake below our house. They were later joined by some huge swans, who whistled while they stood around on the ice for the rest of the afternoon waiting for it to melt. The magnificent messengers of spring had arrived, and all in one day.

I like magnificent messengers. Magnificent messengers seem to arrive with a surprise and theatrical panache that I find particularly effective and appealing. They are heralds, proclaiming what is happening or what is soon to happen. Their flair is not in themselves; rather, it has to do with the spectacular nature of what they proclaim. You do not announce something grand with a deadpan approach, and spring is absolutely grand, especially after months of ice-locked winter. The magnificent messengers of

'He is risen' are the three most significant words ever spoken

spring are always robins, geese, swans and, my special favourite, the loud and boisterous sandhill cranes.

The magnificent messengers of God are always angels. In the Bible, their flair for the theatrical makes every other herald known to human or beast pale by comparison. Take Matthew's Easter angel, for instance. In his Gospel, Matthew reports that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James had accompanied Jesus from Galilee. They were close to him and cared for him — always there for him. They were there when he entered Jerusalem. They were there at his death on the cross. They were there when Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in the tomb carved into the rocks. They were there when Joseph rolled the great stone door in place and when the soldiers came to seal the door and stand guard over it. They were special disciples of Jesus, these wonderful women, and perhaps that is why God sent the angel when they went back to the tomb on Sunday morning and discovered it empty. Matthew describes what the two Marys saw: "And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of

the Lord, descending from Heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow" (28:2).¹

Now that's what I call an entrance with flair. I can just imagine that magnificent messenger calmly sitting on the huge stone after all the pyrotechnics. The Greek word Matthew uses for "angel" literally means "messenger." A messenger is a pretty mundane and common thing to be — much more common and mundane than what we usually associate with the title "angel." What makes the messenger magnificent and worthy of the grand entrance is not his title but the message: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen" (Matthew 28:5-6).²

"He is risen" — the three most significant words ever spoken. The greatest communication ever delivered. The magnificent message. For those who will not receive this message, it will cause them to shake with fear and leave them as dead (Matthew 28:4) at some point in time. But for those who will receive it, the angel's message is clear: "Fear not!" Never fear anything or anyone ever again. Jesus is risen! Death is defeated! Life is eternal! Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

"Salvation that comes from trusting Christ — which is the message we preach — is already within easy reach. In fact, the Scriptures say, 'The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart.' For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, 'Anyone who believes in him will not be disappointed'" (Romans 10:8-11).³

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the just published *Like a Winter's Aspen: Embracing the Creator's Fire*.

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Celtic spirituality listens for the heartbeat of God

Presbyterianism is influenced by ancient Celtic and Mediterranean traditions

by J. Philip Newell

One of the favourite images in the Celtic tradition is of John the Beloved leaning against Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23). It was said of him that he thus heard the heartbeat of God. He became an image of listening within life for the beat of God's presence. The emphasis is on listening within every moment and listening within ourselves and within all things for the beat without which there would be no life. The practice is of an inner attentiveness that can also lead to greater outer awareness and to a passionate commitment to care for one another and for the life of creation.

"Celtic spirituality" is a modern term that describes an ancient phenomenon. It refers to a stream of Christian spirituality that was born in the fourth-century world of Ireland and Britain. It is distinct from the "Mediterranean" tradition, which developed its distinguishing characteristics in the world of Constantine's Roman Empire. Just as we use the term "Canadian history" to include references to the development of a people who later called themselves Canadian, so we use the term Celtic spirituality to identify features of a spirituality that formed in the part of the world that later became known as the Celtic world of Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

There are two main characteristics that distinguish the Celtic tradition from the Mediterranean. The first is the Celtic belief that what is deepest in us is the image of God. Genesis 1, with its description of humanity made in the image and likeness of God, is a foundational text. Everything else said about us needs to be said in the context of this founda-



Photo by Diana Tuinhof

The Manitoba Millennium High Cross stands in front of First Church, Winnipeg. Panels designed by artist David Rankine depict themes of Celtic spirituality.

tional truth — what is deepest in us is the sacredness of God's image. On the other hand, the Mediterranean tradition says that what is deepest in us at birth is our sinfulness. This has had the effect of seeing grace as essentially opposed to what is at the heart of human nature.

A 19th-century teacher in the Celtic tradition used the analogy of royal gar-

ments that were still woven through with a costly thread of gold. If the golden thread were removed somehow, the entire garment would unravel. So it is, he said, with the image of God woven into the fabric of our being. If God's image were taken out of us somehow, we would unravel and cease to be. The image of God is not simply a characteristic of who we are, which may or may not be there depending on whether or not we have received the grace of baptism; the image of God is the essence of our being, and sin has not had the power to undo what God has woven into the fabric of our being.

The belief that what is deepest in us is the image of God has a number of radically important implications for our spirituality. It is to say the wisdom of God is deeper in our souls than the ignorance of what we have become. It is to say the beauty of God is truer to our depths than the ugliness of what we have done. Similarly, it is to say the creativity of God and the passion of God for what is just and right is deeper than any barrenness or apathy in our lives. And above all else, it is to say that love — the desire to love and to be loved — is at the very centre of the mystery of our being, deeper than any fear or hatred that may hold us hostage.

This is not to be naive about the power of sin and the perversion of what has gone wrong in our souls and relationships. It is simply to say that what God has planted at the core of our beings has not been undone by sin. The ninth-century Irish teacher John Scotus Eriugena said we suffer from an infection of soul, what he called a "leprosy" of soul. Just as the physical disease of

leprosy has the power to distort the human face, making it appear ugly and grotesque, so sin has the power to infect the countenance of the soul, making it appear unnatural and even monstrous — so that we come to believe that is the true face of the soul. In the Gospel story, when Jesus offers the grace of healing to the lepers, he does not give them new faces; rather, he restores their true faces.

One of the favourite figures in early Celtic legend is the third-century Christian contemplative Antony of the Desert. He even appears etched into the designs of high-standing Celtic crosses. When people came out to see him in his desert hermitage, Antony was remembered as saying: “When you die and go to your place of judgment, you will not be asked

Celtic tradition refers to Christ as the ‘truly natural One.’ He shows us the true face of our soul made in the image of God

whether you have become another Antony, or another St. Paul or St. Mary. You will be asked whether you have become truly yourself.” In the Celtic tradition, there is a passionate and rigorous emphasis on repentance. Repentance, which simply means turning around, is not a turning around to become someone other than ourselves; it is a turning around in order to be truly ourselves. It is a turning away from the falseness of what we have become to re-turn to the true depths of our nature.

Grace and nature are both gifts of God. They are not opposed to one another. As Eriugena said, “Nature is the gift of being, and grace is the gift of well-being.” Nature is a sacred gift. At the heart of the gift of our human nature is the image of God, knit together in our mother’s womb. Yes, it has been infected by sin. Yes, it has been covered over by the falseness and inhumanity of what we have done to ourselves and to one another. And, yes, it needs what Eriugena called “the medicine of grace” if it is to be healed. But grace is given not that we might become other than natural or somehow more than natural; it is given that we might be truly natural. Grace is

given to free us from the unnaturalness of what we have become. The Celtic tradition, in fact, refers to Christ as “the truly natural One,” not as the supernatural One. He shows us the true face of our soul made in the image of God.

The second main characteristic that distinguishes the Celtic tradition from the Mediterranean tradition is the belief that creation is essentially good. Genesis 1 is a foundational text again. At the end of each day in the creation story is the phrase “And God saw that it was good.” Then at the end of the sixth day are the words “And God saw all that had been made, and behold it was very good.” In the Celtic tradition, creation is viewed not merely as something that occurred at one point in the past; creation is forever being born. It is forever coming forth from the womb of God, from the realm of the invisible into the realm of the visible. And God forever sees what is created as essentially good.

Not only is creation viewed as a blessing, it is also regarded in essence as an expression of God. In his commentary on the prologue to St. John’s Gospel — in particular the words “In the beginning was the Word ... and all things have come into being through the Word” — John Scotus Eriugena wrote that all things have been uttered into being by God. If God were to stop speaking, creation would cease to exist. Creation is a theophany — a showing or revealing of God. At the heart of the Christian mystery is the belief that God is love, that God is self-giving. All that God does, therefore, is a giving of Self. Creation, the great work of God, is essentially an offering of God’s Self. It is a Self-disclosure to us of the mystery of God.

The answer to the question “Where do we look for God?” is not “away from creation” but, rather, “deep within all that has been created.” Within ourselves, within our children and within all that has been spoken into being, we can listen for the expression of God. Eriugena said God speaks to us through two books: the “little book” of Scripture and the “big book” of creation. This is not to be naive about what has gone wrong in creation. It is not to pretend that creation, like the human soul, has not been infected by sin. It is to affirm, however, that creation is

For further reading

Three books by J. Philip Newell:

- *Listening to the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality*
- *The Book of Creation*
- *Celtic Benediction*

like a sacred text that we can learn to read in our journey of knowing God. It is also to say that what we do to matter is a spiritual issue, whether that be the matter of our human bodies, the matter of the body of creation, or the matter of the body politic and how we handle the resources of the earth. All these matters are central to spirituality in the Celtic tradition. On the other hand, the Mediterranean tradition has tended to separate spirit and matter. The mystery of God has been distanced from the matter of creation. What we do to creation, therefore, has often been regarded as not an essential part of our spirituality.

The Celtic tradition was formally rejected by the Synod of Whitby in the Kingdom of Northumbria (later, northern England) in the year 664. Part of the debate at Whitby reflected the Celtic mission’s conviction that it was continuing the way of the Beloved Disciple who had leaned against Jesus at the Last Supper. The synod’s rejection of the Celtic tradition was a tragedy for Western Christianity. But the reality is that it has lived on in the Celtic fringes of Britain over the centuries and is being recovered today. Although Presbyterianism has been heavily influenced by many aspects of the Mediterranean tradition, another part of our Scottish inheritance is the Celtic stream. The reclaiming of it can be an important resource for spirituality in the 21st century. It can help us listen again for the beat of God’s presence — in this moment and in every moment, in our own lives and in the life of all that has being. **R**

Rev. Dr. J. Philip Newell is writer theologian at The Cathedral of The Isles in Scotland. He is the author of many books on Celtic spirituality.

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly:
www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

Mission to El Salvador: The Sequel

A congregation from Northern Ontario brings warmth to Central America

It's a long way in more ways than one from Thunder Bay, Ont., to El Salvador — from a city nestled on the western shore of the great Lake Superior to a country where heat rules and water is at a premium. Yet members of the congregation of Lakeview Church, Thunder Bay, and villagers in El Salvador are beginning to experience a sense of “déjà do.”

The long-distance relationship began in March 2002, when a group of 12 people from Lakeview travelled to El Salvador to help construct houses for families who had lost their homes after Hurricane Mitch and an earthquake in 2000. Using money raised through the congregation and the community, the Lakeview volunteers (who, incidentally, paid their own expenses) worked with local builders to construct two homes.

Perhaps it was sharing memories of the trip with the congregation that triggered it. Perhaps it was a feeling of “promises to keep.” Whatever the reasons, the group decided to continue its mission, again with the support of the church and the community. A new project was created through Presbyterian World Service and Development, in co-operation with Rev. Jim and Brenda Patterson, Canadian Presbyterian missionaries working with the Baptist Federation in El Salvador. Late in January 2003, 10 members of the original Lakeview Dozen left for two weeks in El Salvador (and left behind the average -13 C temperature of a Thunder Bay winter). The group was not entirely unprepared for any culture shock they would encounter. Richard and Gloria Arevalo of Thunder Bay, who immigrated with their family to Canada from El Salvador more than 10 years ago, provided several refresher Spanish lessons. They also shared more about the history, culture, food and way of life of their native country.



The Lakeview mission group is joined by Francisco and Edith and their five children in front of the house the family would soon call their own.

Each day began with a van ride from Santa Ana, the second largest city in the country (where the group stayed with the Pattersons), to the small, rural village of Paso las Flores outside the town of El Refugio, where the Canadians joined with local people to work on two construction

were powered by daily lunches prepared in the outdoor kitchens by the families who would receive the houses.

Two days before the group was to return to Thunder Bay, one of the houses was completed and dedicated. Beti and her two boys were able to leave behind their shack of tree branches and garbage bags and move into a cement block home. A second house was completed a week after the group left — a new home for Edith and Francisco and their five children. A third house funded by Lakeview had been completed in early January before the group arrived.

As well as working on the construction sites, four members of the group offered their services in other ways. Fred Janzen, a pharmacist, and Heather Kibzey, a retired nurse and teacher at Confederation College in Thunder Bay, demonstrated there are no bars to Christian outreach by conducting health care workshops for inmates of Metapan Prison and for villagers at local community centres. Retired educators Jim and Aileen Black conducted workshops in

There were no power tools to work with, no nearby 'home for the handyperson'

sites. Building a house in a village in El Salvador is a more labour-intensive proposition than building one in Canada. There is the obvious sifting of sand, mixing of cement and the carrying and laying of cement blocks. What is less obvious is having to make scaffolding out of tree branches and wiring on sheets of corrugated tin for a roof. There are no power tools and no nearby “home for the handyperson” at which to purchase them. Fortunately, the volunteers themselves

lesson planning and teaching/learning strategies with the principal and teachers in a Metapan school and with Sunday school teachers at the Baptist church in Ahuachapan. Since they were conducted solely in Spanish, the workshops quickly became mutual learning experiences.

On the last day of the trip, the group met with Deyse Cheyne, director of the Institute for Salvadoran Women's Studies, Training and Development, or IMU for short (short indeed — apparently a few letters are lost in translation). IMU receives funding through Presbyterian World Service and Development and has been engaged in community development work with women in small rural communities since 1992. While at the IMU office in San Salvador, the group also met Dr. Dagoberto Gutierrez, a lawyer, environmental scientist, political activist and author, who shared information and insights about the changing world and current global issues.

There were many poignant moments for the Lakeview group, among them being welcomed by their first names when they participated in worship services with congregations they had met on their first trip. But the most moving moment came when the group visited the remote mountain village of El Mozote, near the Honduran border, where the El Salvadoran army massacred all the inhabitants — more than 700 men, women and children — during the revolution in 1981 with the excuse they were rebels. But it turned out to be all the inhabitants but one — Ruffina Amaya escaped by crawling away unnoticed and hiding in the jungle. The group was introduced to this resourceful woman who has since spent her life working for the cause of justice.

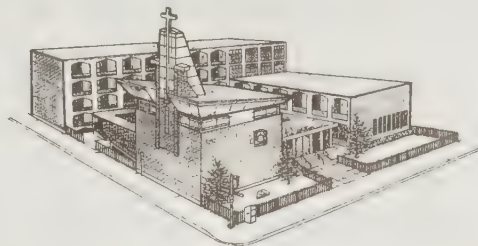
The return trip to El Salvador proved to be every bit an adventure and learning experience as the first. Everywhere they went, the members of the Lakeview group were met with incredible warmth, caring, faith and friendliness. New memories were added to the old, layered like the concrete blocks the group had arduously put into place in building the homes. And, like the homes, the memories will always be there to provide shelter. **R**

Based on a report by Jim Black, a member of the Lakeview mission team.



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Still worshipping after all these years

The Presbytery of Quebec / Presbytère du Québec

by Tom Dickey

It may be hard to believe that Quebec was once a hotbed of Scottish Presbyterianism (if hotbed can be used to describe anything Scottish and Presbyterian). But from the birth of the denomination in Canada in 1875 until about the middle of the 20th century, the Presbytery of Quebec abounded with Presbyterians. The national census for 1871 revealed there were "46,165 Presbyterians & like" in the province. For those interested, there were also more than 1,000 Swedenborgians and 251 Irvingites. Furthermore, the moderator of the mother of all General Assemblies — the one that constituted The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1875 — was Rev. Dr. John Cook, minister of St. Andrew's, Quebec City.

The Presbytery of Quebec covers a large area — basically everything east of Montreal if you divide the province in half vertically. Beginning with St. Andrew's, Quebec City, (the oldest established Presbyterian congregation in the country) in 1759, congregations small and large once dotted the presbytery. There were settlements with such "strange-sounding" names as Inverness, Leeds, Stornoway, Scotstown and Scotch Road. Gaelic was widely spoken. In 1918, Scottish bard Angus MacKay, who was born in one of those strange-sounding settlements (Lingwick, Quebec) in 1864, published a semi-epic poem called *Guard the Gaelic*. In it, among many other things, he cautioned: "Lads and lassies in their teens / Wearing airs of kings and queens / Just a taste of Boston beans / Makes them lose their Gaelic." Perhaps fearing the effects of Boston beans on their lads and lassies,

some churches continued to hold annual Gaelic services into the 1970s.

During the late 1800s and well into the 1900s, the Presbytery of Quebec was heavily involved in "French work" through the denomination's support of the French-Canadian Evangelization Society, the work of the Bible Society and its colporteurs, and the contribution of the fiery French-Canadian evangelist Rev. Charles Chiniquy, a former Roman Catholic priest whose presence at an evangelistic campaign in Montreal once caused a riot. Monsieur Chiniquy died a member of Eglise St-Jean (now a United church) in 1902. The headboard from his bed provided the base for the pulpit in Eglise St-Paul in Melbourne until the closure

of that church in 1996. In its heyday, there were nearly 100 French preaching points across the province. The denomination tried to support this work with boarding schools to enable Presbyterian children from small village mission churches to obtain an education in French. The last of these schools, Point-aux-trembles residential school in Montreal, closed in the 1960s. All the remaining French work and a good number of anglophone congregations were lost to the church and the Presbytery of Quebec through Church Union in 1925.

Today, the presbytery no longer teems with Presbyterians — Scottish or "like." They have become more an endangered species than a thriving flock, and their numbers are continuing to shrink. The steady exodus of anglophones that began



Left: Rev. Charles Chiniquy, French-Canadian Reformer and evangelist.
Below: The 100-year-old Casavant organ in St. Andrew's, Quebec City.





The shell of St. Andrew's Church, Sherbrooke, Que., after the windstorm of the summer of 1999.

in the last half of the 20th century shifted into high gear when the Parti Québécois was elected in 1976. According to the presbytery's clerk, Rev. J. Ross H. Davidson, a considerable amount of time has been spent over the past 50 years "closing congregations decently and in order." What is left, for the moment at least, are seven anglophone congregations, of which only three are self-supporting with full-time clergy. According to statistics in the current Acts and Proceedings, there are less than 300 members in the seven churches combined. There are also two French preaching points, but neither is strong enough to be considered a congregation. The situation was exacerbated by the loss of nine small francophone congregations in the 1980s — an exercise that cost the denomination and presbytery heavily in finances, time, energy and personnel. Rescue does not appear imminent — there are about 10 children in church school throughout the presbytery.

So are there any signs of encouragement in the presbytery, any proof at all that *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*? The answer is yes. There is the new building opening this spring for St. Andrew's, Sherbrooke, the presbytery's largest congregation. The former church building was destroyed in a windstorm in the summer of 1999. (Apparently there are strong winds in the Eastern Townships: Hampton Church literally disappeared in a windstorm in 1917.) There is the fact that, in the past two years, three ministers have accepted calls to churches in the presbytery — not an insignificant

statistic considering the nervous attitude held by much of English-speaking Canada toward French-speaking Quebec. And there is the widely held Presbyterian conviction that where there's a camp there's hope. In this case, it is Camp d'action biblique, a 65-acre site established in 1947 in the heart of the Eastern Townships. The camp is populated in the summer primarily by children from Montreal, from francophone Reformed congregations of another denomination, local children and a few Presbyterians. Among events planned for this year are a young adults retreat, bilingual youth camps and a family camp.

But perhaps the most promising and enduring encouragement for the presbytery comes from, in Mr. Davidson's words, "the strong assurance that God is good, that congregations within this presbytery have been richly blessed in the past and that they continue to see God's providential hand upon their collective and individual lives." **R**

Plains Town

Was there ever a town
less Biblical to the eye.
No one would mistake it for Bethlehem.
The stores are weathered clapboard,
the houses fabricated out of local lumber.
Even the church with its hard pews,
modest altar, recalls pioneers
more than it does angels.
The streets are paved
so no stranger can walk them
and raise the dust.
And no one rides in on a donkey
when an SUV will do.
And the ones that huddle together
under awnings, on park benches,
merely gossip, don't whisper the
tenets of their faith
out of ear of Roman soldiers.
Still, though miracles are muted,
and prayers take pause
to include this year's crop,
I would not say that we are Godless.
The light is wide and golden.
The wind whips through, felt though unseen.
A man stops to help another.
The pieces are everywhere.
Maybe, in time, we'll know them whole.

— John Grey



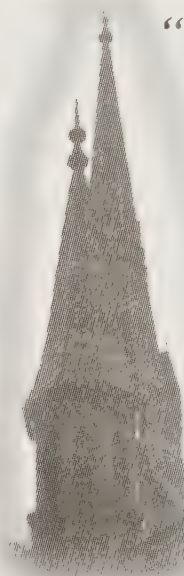
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Gibson's Passion is disturbing

The point of Jesus' death is not that he died horribly but that he died to save us from our sins

by Andrew Faiz

To fully understand the Mel Gibson movie *The Passion of The Christ*, you must have read the books upon which it is based. I've read the four primary books, each of which tells the same story from a different perspective. The story is of the birth, life and death of a man named Jesus. The combined effect of the books is to create a cubist portrait of this man — it seems disjointed at first but, through some study, one gets a rich and profound impression of the protagonist. It is a radical form of storytelling and somehow it works.

Mr. Gibson, as producer, co-writer and director of the movie, has chosen to take all study and radicalism out of the story, and to remove any narrative thrust, dramatic tension and character development. He has chosen instead to turn the story of Jesus into a vulgar and simple-minded screed. He has chosen to turn Jesus into a punching bag, which only adds to the vulgarity. Moreover, Mr. Gibson has done all this in the name of God and of Christ and of all those individuals and institutions who hold God and Christ dear.

If you want to see this as a "movie," you will be disappointed. It makes no sense. This Jesus is somehow a political and religious threat to the high priests of his religion. The movie never bothers to tell us how or why. This man, apparently, has many followers and was greeted into town with a parade. The movie provides no context for his fame or his importance. In fact, if anything, Jesus comes off as a crazy person — spouting talk of his own divinity and power. Without the context of his birth and his work, his death is meaningless. And Mr. Gibson has provided a meaningless experience.

If you want to see it as a way to augment your religious experience, since



James Caviezel portrays Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ*.

you already know the contexts of the story from your own studies, you will be disappointed. The movie is misnamed. It should be called *The Beating to a Pulp of Jesus*. The point of Jesus' death is not that he died horribly but that he died to save us from our sins: "For God so loved the world, he gave his only Son." If Jesus had died slipping on a banana peel or quietly in his sleep, he would still, within the context of the Gospels, our creeds, and our faith, have died for our sins because his Father, our God, so deemed it necessary. It is the ultimate sacrifice: the birth of grace. Watching an actor in a rubber suit being whipped silly for an hour and a half does nothing to augment our religious experience.

If you want to see it because of all the fuss, then you might have something to talk about. Long before it opened on Ash Wednesday — the cheek of the filmmaker! — the movie was criticized for being anti-Semitic. Well, it is: because it is not interested in a loving and teaching Christ; instead, it is interested only in a

victimized man. Jesus is beaten, whipped, spat upon, kicked, whipped, falls repeatedly, is beaten again — his skin torn to shreds and covered in blood. It is a mean and heartless process that demands understanding, and the only explanation the filmmaker provides is a sub-textual statement of victimhood at the hands of cunning villains, who all happen to be Jewish. (The Roman leaders are either thoughtful or fey; the Roman soldiers are happy sadists.)

But there is more to this cultural experience than its Semitism. We have to wonder why Christians have defended it, often sight unseen. Perhaps we felt victimized by the criticism. Perhaps it was a knee-jerk reaction to the criticism. Perhaps we had nothing better to do. Regardless of why, we certainly played into the filmmaker's hands. The movie was publicized through churches; we were used to promote a violent and mean-spirited movie feigning to be a meditation on Christ. And we let ourselves be used.

Gibson has been associated in the popular press with ultra-conservative Roman Catholics on the fringe of the church. He is also an A-list Hollywood personality with a lot of money and a lot of power. He is a man of talent and cunning who has made a movie that promotes a harsh interpretation of the Gospels. And I find it disturbing that Christian leaders have rallied around him. I think it's because we Christians feel victimized by society. If that is true, then Gibson's cartoonish bloody Jesus really is our Christ. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

Bishop, Ruth M. (nee Barclay), in her 86th year, in Charlottetown, P.E.I., on Feb. 3, 2004. Wife of Rev. J.H. Bishop. Besides her husband, she leaves one daughter, Naomi Bandt (Daniel); and one son, Alan G. Bishop (Debra); five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren; one brother, Daniel M. Barclay. The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Blaine Dunnett.

Budding, Hubert, husband of Nan; elder, St. John's, Toronto; former missionary in Nepal, died Dec. 27, 2003, in Toronto. Hubert also had a ministry with the poor of Toronto and the disenfranchised of the world.

Cameron, J. Grant, 94, formerly of Maxville, Ont., Glengarry County, passed away peacefully Aug. 1, 2003. Elder, choir member and long-time member, Alexandra and Greenbrier Presbyterian churches, Brantford, Ont. He will be fondly remembered and sorely missed.

Heath, John Charles, long-time member, Chedoke Church, Hamilton, Ont., died Jan. 28, 2004. John served over the years on the board of managers, as treasurer and elder.

Keith, Stanley Walker, died Nov. 6, 2003, at home in the presence of his family in Dawson Creek, B.C., at age 77. Stan was a long-time elder and clerk of session at St. James Presbyterian Church, Dawson Creek, B.C., and a former moderator of the Presbytery of Peace River. Stan's life was noted by his devotion to family, community and church. He exemplified the love of Jesus Christ and this impacted many people in the community. Stan is survived by his wife, Glenda, daughters Sharilyn and Shauna, sons Wayne, Doug and Hal and their families.

Larochelle-Reed, Jeanne Hélène, daughter of Réal and Yvette (Perron), died Nov. 12, 2003. Sister of Louise (Ronald Young) and Alice (Gary Coleman). Mother of Jeffrey (Michelle Pepin) Reed. Faithful member of Chalmers United Church, L'Église des Cantons de L'Est, L'Église St. Paul and St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Melbourne, Que. Jeanne served as treasurer, elder, clerk of session, choir and camp d'action biblique. Rest in peace.

Leitch, Archie D., 84, elder, faithful member of Guthrie Presbyterian Church, Alvinston, Ont., Sept. 3, 2003.

Livingstone, Roy Douglas, son of Roy Livingstone and Yvonne Gregoire, husband of Barbara MacDonald and father of eight children. Member and elder at the Danville, Danville-Asbestos, and St. Andrew's Presby-

terian Church, Melbourne, Que. Born Oct. 11, 1927, died Oct. 12, 2003. Good and faithful servant.

MacLeod, Sarah, 81, member, Bethel, Riverview, N.B., died Jan. 14, 2004. Former long-time member, St. Andrew's, New Glasgow, N.S.

Parker, Harold S., long-time member and session clerk, Guthrie Presbyterian Church, Alvinston, Ont., Oct. 16, 2003; grandson of the late Rev. David Perrie, DD, who was moderator of General Assembly in 1929.

Reid, Scott, 82, passed away July 9, 2003, in London, Ont. Retired elder, St. Andrew's, Wingham, Ont.; adherent, St. George's, London.

Ross, Catherine (Kay), long-time member of St. John's, Toronto.

Sayers, Rev. Willis Edwin, passed away in the Ottawa Hospital on Dec. 31, 2003, his 79th birthday. Following military service in World War II, he continued his education at University of Toronto and Knox College and was ordained to the ministry in 1953. He ministered to congregations in the presbyteries of Barrie, Peterborough, Halifax and Lunenburg, Glengarry, Ottawa and Stratford-Huron. After his retirement in 1987, he attended Parkwood Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, where he sang in the choir and was a member of the session. He is survived by five children: Roseanne, Lorraine, Caley, Kenzie and Sheryl; 12 grandchildren and one brother.

Stiles, Ben, 83, member, Bethel, Riverview, N.B. Died in hospital Jan. 24, 2004. Predeceased by his wife, Marjorie.

Wiley, Ruth Marion (nee McCready), 84, elder emeritus, Rockway, St. Catharines, Ont., Feb. 12, 2004. Ruth Wiley is fondly remembered as first female elder of Niagara presbytery. She served in the Women's Missionary Society, Rockway Women's Association, Cubs and Scouts, numerous community, professional and charitable organizations (Women's Institute, Business and Professional Women's Organization, Real Estate Board). A wonderful celebration of life service was held Feb. 21 at Rockway Church to the glory of God.

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All notices of pulpit vacancies will be charged to the congregation: \$10 for the basic notice and \$1 per word for additional information. (There is no charge for congregations on the Every Home or Club 50 plans.) **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

Word scramble answers from page 50:

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RISEN CHRIST
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- work experience in all aspects of publication.

All inquiries and resumés by
April 15, 2004 to:

Gloria Wasacase
Personnel Committee
280 Wellington St.
Brantford, ON N3S 3Z9
Phone: 1-519-735-7264

Email: GWasacase0403@rogers.com

called to wonder

Written by
Erin Walton,
First Church, Edmonton

April is here, which means spring has sprung!

This year, Easter is in April too!

Easter can be a lot of fun with egg hunts and bunnies and chocolate!

Easter is very important to Christians.

Try these Easter activities below to help you remember what's really special about Easter.

Cross Necklace

What you need

- table covered with newspapers
- Popsicle sticks
- small coloured beads in a large container
- Tacky Glue
- yarn
- scissors

How to make it

1. Glue one Popsicle stick across the other Popsicle stick, near the end, to form a cross.
2. Cut a piece of yarn long enough to be a necklace for a child. Wrap it around the cross where the two Popsicle sticks meet and tie a knot. (If an adult helps you, he or she may drill a small hole in the top of the cross to thread the yarn through instead.)
3. Apply enough Tacky Glue to one side of the cross so that beads can stick to it.
4. Glue the beads to the cross using one of these two methods:
 - (a) Place the cross, glue side down, into the container of beads. Push a bit to make the beads stick. Remove the cross from the container. If needed, push the beads into the glue.
 - (b) Place the cross glue side up on the table. Arrange the beads on the glue in whatever pattern you like.
5. Allow the glue to dry.



Unscramble the following words:

SCSOR _____

ESNIR HRTISC _____

PLMA DSUAYN _____

OGDO RYFDAI _____

SSUJE _____

See page 49 for answers to the word scramble

You will find more Easter activities online at: www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html



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- April 16 - 24** 160th Anniversary Choir Tour to Western Canada.
- May 11** Screening of the movie
7:00 pm "*The Gospel of John.*"
- May 12** Panel Discussion:
9:30 am-12:30 pm "*Jesus Goes to the Movies:*
The Gospel of John From Ancient Text to Modern Screen" with Pat Dutcher-Walls, Peter Richardson & Garth Drabinsky.
160th Anniversary Garden Party.
A luncheon to honour the 2004 Knox graduates, the 2004 Lay Education graduates, the Knox/Ewart reunion graduates - 1944, '54, '64, '79, '94 and Knox volunteers.
- May 12** 12:30 pm **Convocation:** Address *On the Front Lines* - Brian Stewart, CBC Senior Correspondent.
- May 17 - 18** **Understanding Congregational Pastoral Care: 1 Corinthians and Your Congregation** with Dorcas Gordon and Anne Anderson. A Korean language event.
- June 5** 9:00 am-4:00 pm **Holy Matters: Symposium on Spirituality** with Knox College faculty.
- June 9** 12:00 pm **Knox/Ewart Graduates Lunch.** Speaker: Prof. Stuart Macdonald
General Assembly *Knox College: 160 years of Saints, Characters (and occasional water fights).*
- June 14 - 17** **Starting Well.**
A program for people in their first three years of ministry.
- Aug 9 - 13 & Aug 16 - 20** **Knox College's Summer Program.**
A series of morning lectures for people over 55.
- Sept 29** **MacDonald Lecture.**
2:00 pm-4:00 pm *Youth Ministry Out There: Being Church to Youth in their Context* with Karen Bach.
- Oct. 18** **New Wine in New Wineskins:**
9:00 am-4:00 pm *Incarnational Preaching on Matthew.*
A workshop with Jana Childers.

Oct. 23
6:00 pm

Nov. 5
5:30 pm

7:00 pm
Nov. 10 - 11

Dec. 1
7:30 pm

KNOXFRA Dinner

for former residents with Prof. Stuart Macdonald speaking on "*Margaret Wilson: Icon and Mascot.*"

160th Anniversary Worship Service commemorating the first day of classes held in 1844.

160th Anniversary Dinner.

Laidlaw Lectures with Walter Wink & June Keener Wink "*Jesus and the Cycle of Violence.*"

Knox College Choir.

Christmas at Knox: Celebrating 160 years.

2005

February

Feb. 15 - 18

March 7
1:30 am-4:30 pm

7:00 pm-9:00 pm
May 11 or 12

May 12
12:30 pm

7:30 pm

Knox Celebrates Black History Month

with Scholar-in-Residence The Rev. Collin Cowan from Kingston, Jamaica.

Take Care III: Holding a Sacred Trust with Integrity in Today's World with Andrew Irvine.

The Church in the 21st Century.

A symposium with the Moderator (2004) of the Church of Scotland, Alison Elliot. Public Lecture with Alison Elliot.

The Future of the Church in North America. A panel discussion.

Graduates luncheon to honour the 2005 graduates, the Knox/Ewart reunion graduates of 1945, '55, '65, '80, '95 and Knox volunteers.

Convocation: Address by Douglas John Hall, Emeritus Professor of Christian Theology, McGill University.

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May 2004

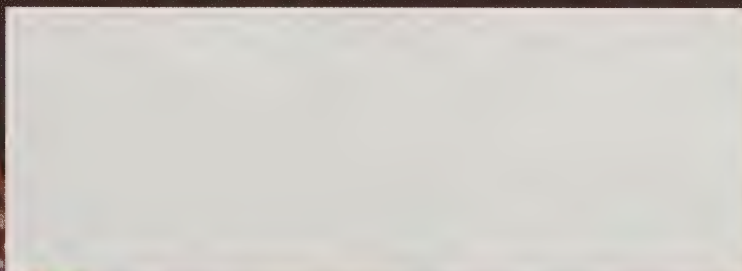
Mid-life miracles

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our cover

Stephen Lewis, United Nations special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, at Calvin Church, Toronto.

Photo by David Harris.

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Security can't be a retreat from peace

Pick up a newspaper anywhere on the planet and it becomes clear that security is one of the biggest concerns in our world. It appears in reaction to our intense focus on violent crime, even as crime rates continue to fall. It appears in our reaction expressed through our governments to the events of Sept. 11, 2001. It is the alleged justification for the decisions of many governments to build various weapons and defences: the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Far East, the U.S. ballistic missile defence system, the building of the wall in Israel and Palestine, the introduction of sophisticated biometrics into personal identification such as passports. And it is at the heart of many religious debates in Christianity: people want to feel secure about the grounding of their faith and its extension into their everyday ethical life.

Desire for security is natural. In psychologist Abraham Maslow's famous hierarchy, safety needs follow immediately after our physiological needs for air, food, water, sleep, etc. In the Bible, images of security abound. Jesus identifying himself with a mother hen protecting her brood is a favourite passage.

But birds also push their young out of the nest, forcing them to learn to fly and fend for themselves. So life also entails risk along with the need for security. The parable of the talents sets up this tension. The steward who takes no risk and buries the money for safekeeping is judged untrustworthy.

A balance has to be found between security and risk.

How much risk one is willing to take and, therefore, how much security one requires depend on one's sense of vulnerability, self-confidence and experience. The events of 9/11 stunned Americans and Canadians because of the longtime peace in our countries. A recent article in *The New Yorker* about nuclear weapons proliferation quoted former UN weapons inspector Robert Gallucci as saying of the United States: "We haven't been this vulnerable since the British burned Washington in 1814." Eighteen-fourteen — the end of the two-year battle for an independent British North America, which eventually became Canada. Since then, the world's wars have been fought mostly in Europe and Africa. The confident swagger North Americans had from growing up in security and peace was hit in the back of the knees when airplanes struck the Twin Towers. Even so, we know little of the anxiety other people face daily.

I recently had a taste of the security issues at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I accompanied a group of church leaders making an ecumenical visit to the Middle East in support of Christians and our interfaith partners there working for peace and justice. (The feature story and photographs about this will

appear in the June issue.) Walking in downtown West Jerusalem the day after the assassination of Sheikh Yassin in Gaza — we had been in Gaza the day before he was killed — it was impossible not to look at each bus and wonder if it would be the last thing one would see in this world. We met a small group of Jewish women who work for peace and justice and reconciliation with Palestinians in their office in the German Colony, next door to where a suicide bomb had exploded in a café. One of them was asked if everyone really was as fearful as it seemed. She replied: "Anyone who says they're not afraid is a liar."

We also experienced fear at the Erez checkpoint in northern Gaza. The checkpoint looks like a cross between a large cattle market and a military emplacement. Returning from a day in Gaza, we made our way down the long barbed wire-enclosed concrete tunnel, through several scanners, turnstiles and inspections of cameras and passports. Our group of nine was waiting for a teenage girl soldier to walk us to our van when a young Palestinian woman began coming through the maze. As she entered the enclosure before the last electric gate, she was told to put the carry-on suitcase she was pulling on the ground. She started to push the handle down but a soldier yelled at her to stop. No, no, he said, just lay it down. Carefully, a man began going through her case as our escort arrived. As we walked away, we all muttered to one another about the fear we had felt as the woman began pushing the handle down. We feared it might have been a bomb. But we also noticed the fear in the young woman's eyes, surrounded as she was by concrete, barbed wire and soldiers armed with M-16s, fingers on the trigger.

With such fear on each side, there is little of the confidence needed to take the risky steps toward peace. Israelis have a clear right to be secure in their country, and Palestinians deserve the security of a country. Yet we saw widespread evidence of Israel fostering instability in Palestinian society instead of encouraging the creation of a stable, civil society that could support a separate state.

What can Canadian Christians do? We can pray for peace and support the work of our churches in mission and development. Through Palestinian and Israeli partners, churches are able to help both sides build the kind of confidence needed to take the risks that could lead to peace. Peace is — always has been — a risky venture. But it is surely the only way to achieve lasting security.

David Harris

Violence can never bring peace

When my wife and I visited a church in Seoul, South Korea, we received a book in which Rev. Chang-whan Kim is quoted: "Violence can never bring peace, and 'putting the sword back in its place' is admitting God's authority and confirms God's love for us." He said this to more than one million people in Seoul in 1987.

Together with millions of Koreans and countless others, I hope and pray South Korea and North Korea will settle their differences peacefully. The ramifications of such a settlement would be felt worldwide!

We don't need any more war! I suggest that all of us write letters to our politicians and let them know this. Letters can make a huge difference.

Stan Penner,
Landmark, Man.

Who should pay?

I was very concerned by the article Maternity Leave — Who Pays? in the January issue. When was it decided that society, not parents, should bear the financial responsibility for having a child? Why are parents on leave after the birth of their child entitled to Employment Insurance benefits? They are neither, strictly speaking, out of work nor looking for work. Why should employers feel compelled to "top up the employee's EI benefits" when the employee is provid-

ing no service to them and, in fact, may decide not to return to that employer?

We are doing young people a grave disservice by encouraging them to rely on two incomes to meet their daily expenses. If they can't afford to live on one income for a few months, they really can't afford to raise a child. (Trust me, we've raised three.) We all pay through our taxes for their inability or refusal to tighten their belts and manage their own finances more responsibly.

Who should pay for maternity leave? The parents.

Gwyn Crowe,
Calgary

Not a great comparison

I was offended by the first three paragraphs of *Scrolls Come to Canada* (February issue) when Prof. Peter Flint compared touching the oldest copy of Psalms to holding Wayne Gretzky's hockey stick. Why would a research scholar make such a comparison? It sounds like blasphemy to me. Wayne Gretzky may be called "the great one," but I don't believe this kind of comparison is appropriate.

Margo King,
Millgrove, Ont.

Considering Jesus' suffering

I am perplexed by the talk about anti-Semitism being generated by Mel

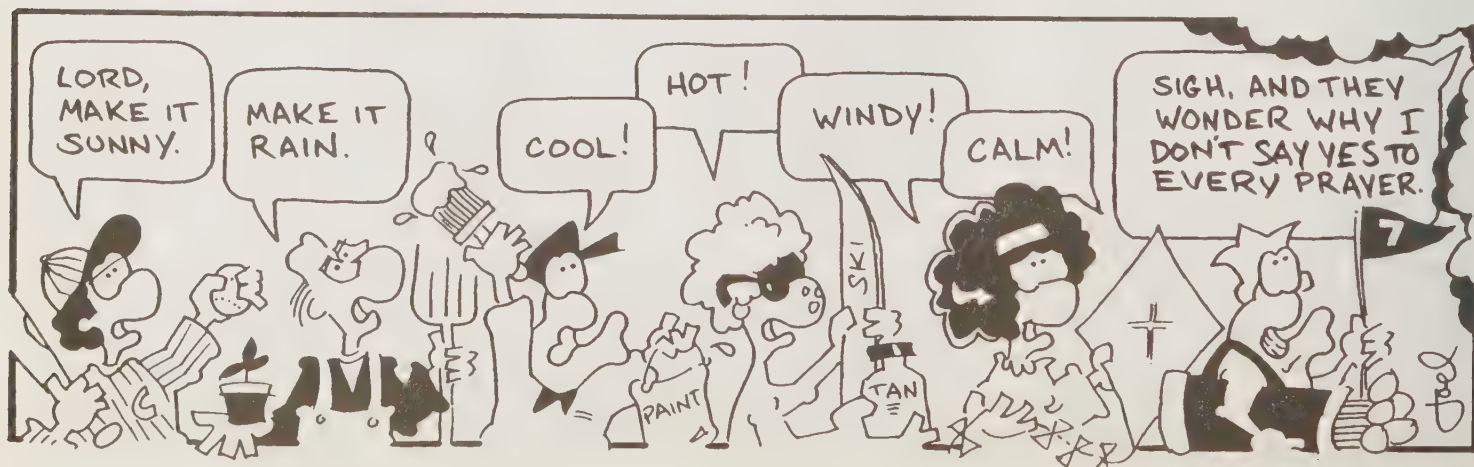
Gibson's film *The Passion of The Christ*. I have read explanations, apologies and denials. In one sense, we all killed Christ, of course; but who was actually responsible for Jesus' crucifixion?

Aristotle suggested four causes for most things: formal, instrumental, material and final. So the formal (blueprint) cause was God, the instrumental (human agents) was the "Jews" and Pilate, the material was the cross and the final (purpose) was the reconciliation of the sinful universe to God (Colossians 1:20).

As we consider the instrumental cause, we are confronted today with bold revisionism. It may be politically incorrect to say the Jews killed Jesus, but is this not what all the Jewish writers of the New Testament said? Nowhere do they accuse Pilate and the Romans of being those ultimately responsible for Christ's death. Jesus "came to what was his own, and his own people did not receive him" (John 1:11). We do not know what percentage of the Jewish population wanted Jesus to be killed because there were, of course, many who loved him.

So what does all this mean? Taking an analogy from recent times, one could argue that, since Germans elected and cheered for Hitler, the Germans are to blame for plunging the planet into the Second World War, an unparalleled disaster. Though a small number were against Hitler, the great majority *did*

Pontius' Puddle



shout "Sieg Heil." However, more than 70 years later, only ignorant people would blame the descendants of those Germans for what happened in Germany back in the 1930s. In fact, they are our allies now.

So, after 2000 years, to blame Jews today for what *some* of their ancestors did is nothing but lunacy. Anyone who would use any excuse to be anti-Semitic must always remember what Jesus said in John 4:22: "Salvation is from the Jews."

Those who shout anti-Semitism about *The Passion* denigrate a film that tells it as it was. Let us face the historical, biblical facts and not revise history for reasons of political correctness.

H.L. Wipprecht,
Cobalt, Ont.

Regular church members should do some self-examination about whether they really need to see Mel Gibson's movie about the suffering Christ endured for us some two millennia ago. Does God want us spending our money to see this movie, thus supporting the making of it? I have my doubts. Would it not be better for us, during a quiet hour by ourselves in or after Passion Week, to read the chapters about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in God's word? Do we so badly need to feel the sort of suffering Jesus went through? I think not.

Jane Roseboom,
Renfrew, Ont.

A church divided cannot stand

I am dismayed by the content of the *Record* with respect to editorial comment and articles. The beliefs my wife and I hold are constantly being challenged by the one foundation we held secure — the Presbyterian Church. Every issue of the *Record* brings more questions about sexuality. Why doesn't the church state clearly that its beliefs are based on the Bible and not on popular opinion?

A generation of people now in their 20s has been steeped in lifestyles accepted by society. So many live together in common-law and homosexual relationships. When they read the *Record* or go to General Assembly, those lifestyles are not challenged; they are discussed. The

A Fresh Start

Purchasing these fishing nets helps this fisherman earn an income to support his family.

With the help of Presbyterian World Service & Development and the Institute for Development Education, this fisherman in a small village in India received a loan to buy fishing nets. Without a credit history, or collateral, he was not eligible for a loan from a bank. The loan had reasonable rates, and he was able to pay it back with the fish he caught and sold. Now he can support his family.



Photo: Guy Smagghe, PWS&D

PWS&D partners in India, Ghana, Nicaragua, Mozambique and Guatemala are helping people form small savings and credit groups to help micro-entrepreneurs start small businesses. It is one way our partners help break cycles of poverty in their communities.

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 - **UKRAINIAN WATERWAYS**
Sept 6/04 – 16 Days
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Sept 29/04 – 18 Days
 - **EMPIRES of the BLACK SEA**
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letters

continued

Acts and Proceedings of General Assembly 2003 contains 21 pages of discussion on human sexuality!

A church divided cannot stand! Many members are asking whether this church has a backbone. The Presbyterian Church gained many devoted members after the United Church allowed ordained homosexuals into the pulpit. Has the leadership of the Presbyterian Church also come under the influence of a lobby group fostering support for the homosexual lifestyle?

I would like an answer to this question. I would like the leadership in this church to state unequivocally what this church believes about sexual orientation.

*Terry W. Axford,
Dorchester, Ont.*

I was distressed by Mr. Boyer's letter (March *Record*) favouring same-sex marriage and accepting gays and lesbians as Ministers of the Word and Sacraments because God is love. God, who is also holy, demands our obedience to his precepts, not to our desires that come from deceitful and wicked hearts (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Only as we spend time daily in his presence, seeking for God's wisdom, guidance and love in his word, will we understand God's precepts and obey them. When I read Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Corinthians 10:6-8, I cannot agree with Mr. Boyer's views.

*E. Shaw,
Mactier, Ont.*

Why do the numbers decline?

Why declining numbers? Judgmental control. From stem to stern in the church, the attitude is that everyone must be the same to fit in instead of welcoming people in their uniqueness. Imperfect people decrying other imperfect people creates an institution of people pointing fingers.

If a lifestyle truly offends you, you are free to change churches instead of brutally condemning people. Similarly, people with alternative lifestyles could start their own sect where they do not have to butt heads to prove their right to exist or brow-beat others to bend their principles.

God created a diverse, interesting and challenging world. How can the church be representative of a loving Kingdom of God while spewing harsh dictatorial edicts. The abusive narrow theme "Denounce yourself or die" still prevails. Jesus chose death. Obviously, congregations by the droves are making the same choice. Our dissension and negativity give fodder to the media to display our ugliness. This is a turnoff for those who simply tune in to the positive Dr. Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif., who says to forget the debates and focus on Jesus.

*Ann Riddell,
Oshawa, Ont.*

Idea saves a lot of money

Funds at Parkwood Church in Ottawa, as with most churches, are limited. But our fabric stacking chairs were worn through to the foam and in need of repair. Brainstorming brought new ideas for repairing them at minimal cost.

We removed badly worn seats and put the backs from other chairs into the seat position (they are the same size and shape). The fabric from badly worn seats was cut into strips and used to sew onto the worn fabric at the front of some less worn seats; then, the repaired seat was turned around to face the back of the chair. It was so neatly sewn, the repair was not noticeable. After doing this, we had some bare chair frames left, so we bought sets of seats and backs (\$10 each) that could be easily assembled onto the frames.

*Dorothy Nekrassoff,
Nepean, Ont.*

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

Convocation time

The 137th convocation of The Presbyterian College, Montreal, will be held at The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul on Thursday, May 13, at 7:30 p.m. (not 8 p.m. as reported in the April *Record*).



Working with other churches to fulfill God's mission

The Presbyterian Church is one communion within a host of communities

Two festivals of the Christian community occur in May — Ascension Day (May 20) and Pentecost (May 30). In celebrating the ascension of Jesus, we focus on the reign of Christ in the world and on Christ's accessibility and availability to everyone. Small wonder that, at this season, we sing with gladness: "For Christ the Saviour reigns, the God of truth and love; when Jesus purged our sins he took his seat above. Lift up your heart; lift up your voice; rejoice!"

On the Day of Pentecost, we mark among other things the birthday of the Christian Church — the body of Christ in God's world. And so we sing in one of the hymns for Pentecost: "The Spirit brought to birth the church of Christ on Earth to seek and save the lost: God never has withdrawn, since that tremendous dawn, the gifts of Pentecost."

Because of the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost, we are living under the lordship of Christ in and through the gift of what we confess in the Apostles' Creed to be "the holy catholic church." The Presbyterian Church in Canada is one communion within a host of communities of faith in God's world proclaiming the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. In statements and policies adopted by General Assemblies over several decades, the Presbyterian Church makes it clear that it sees itself as one of many denominations within the Christian tradition and that it is committed to active participation in a wide variety of ways with other Christian communions in fulfillment of the mission to which we have been appointed by our baptism. This participation takes place in many ways in local, regional and national committees and organizations.



The Presbyterian Church is part of a global network of churches providing relief and rehabilitation to the people of Bam, Iran, following a devastating earthquake.

Several churches in a community may work together in evangelism programs, endeavours to give a voice to the vulnerable and those on the sidelines of society, vacation Bible schools, joint services on Good Friday, and service projects for those who are hungry, homeless and without sufficient clothing or medical and dental care.

At other levels of church life, we find all sorts of ecumenical co-operation. For example, our denomination participates in several university chaplaincy programs, works co-operatively with other denominations in the provision of theological training for candidates for ministry and for the laity, produces some resources for education in the faith in conjunction with other traditions in the Christian community, and is active in the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. One of the

principal ways by which we work together with other traditions is in the area of the proclamation and pursuit of justice and in the provision of support for those needing help after a disaster or assistance in development projects.

Global relief

After the earthquake in Bam, Iran, on Dec. 26, 2003, a global network of churches called ACT (Action by Churches Together), working together in emergency relief (including Presbyterian World Service and Development), began to respond immediately. Personnel and equipment such as tents were deployed by Dec. 31. The tents came with paraffin ovens and were distributed to those with special needs — the elderly, the orphaned and the ill. Support will be required for some time to provide relief and rehabilitation for the survivors.



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that i am set free.*

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it is all so clear
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thy will be done
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Justice initiatives

In 2001, 10 ecumenical coalitions through which our denomination co-operated to promote peace and justice were brought together to form KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. KAIROS seeks to provide a faithful ecumenical response to the biblical call to "do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Its statement of purpose is: "KAIROS will assist member churches and their members, religious organizations and associated religious bodies in advancing ecumenically the teachings and witness required by their faith's demand that followers of Christ love God by loving their neighbours and respecting the Earth. This will be done through programs that promote: international human rights, justice, peace, viable human development and universal solidarity among peoples of the Earth. It is its intention to operate in English and French."

KAIROS carries on the work of such former groups as the Aboriginal Rights Coalition, Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility, Inter-Church Committee for Refugees. It works in such program areas as global partnerships, international human rights, aboriginal rights and ecological justice.

The KAIROS education and action campaign for 2003-2004 is entitled *Cultivating Just Peace*. The scriptural text that appears on the resources and which nourishes and guides the statements and activities is: "True justice is the harvest reaped by peacemakers from seeds sown in a spirit of peace" (James 3:18). The program invites folk to sign the Manifesto 2000 pledge drafted by 18 former Nobel Peace Prize laureates. It begins: "Recognizing my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, especially for today's children and those of future generations, I pledge — in my daily life, in my family, in my work, my community, my country and my region — to: respect all life (Genesis 1:31), reject violence (Romans 14:19), share with others (Acts 2:44), listen to understand (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13), preserve the planet (Psalm 24), rediscover solidarity (Luke 10:27)."

KAIROS also invites folk to participate in its call to the federal government to support an Agenda for Just Peace that will respect human rights, nurture social security, control arms exports, increase aid and cancel the debt of low-income nations. KAIROS has provided a postcard, which should reach KAIROS by June 30, 2004, for forwarding to the prime minister. (Call 1-877-403-8933 or visit the website at www.Kairoscanada.org for more information.)

Working together with other churches to fulfill the mission God has given to the church not only creates a greater sense of oneness among Christians but also enriches the spirituality and understanding of those who become involved. This has been true for me in my years as a minister and I trust it will be the same for you.

The 130th General Assembly begins on June 6. Please pray for the commissioners as they prepare for this gathering of Christ's people.

Moderator's itinerary

May 6-8

Healing and reconciliation consultation
Mistawasis, Sask. (May 7)
Native Circle, Saskatoon (May 8)

May 9

First, Kenora, Ont. (morning)
Anamiewigummig, Kenora (afternoon)

May 10

Flora House and Anishinabe Fellowship,
Winnipeg

May 12

Convocation, Knox College, Toronto

May 13

Convocation, The Presbyterian College,
Montreal

May 16

St. Andrew's, Newmarket, Ont. (morning)
150th anniversary
Knox, Meaford, Ont. (evening)

May 30

Presbytery of Halifax-Lunenburg
Sharon Dean, N.S.

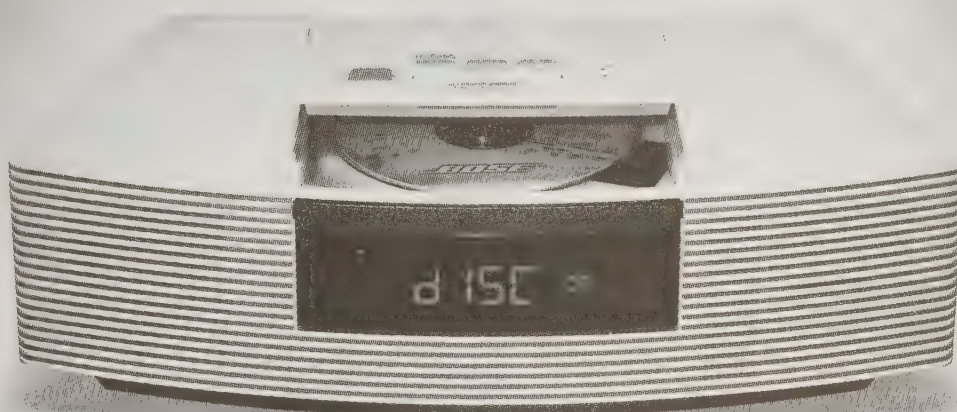
June 6

Amberlea, Pickering, Ont. (morning)
130th General Assembly, Oshawa, Ont.
(evening)

PROOF

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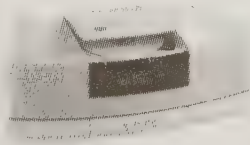


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Korean young people prove God's spell the same in any culture

A recent production of the musical *Godspell* by the young people of Soojung Presbyterian Church, Port Coquitlam, B.C., proved to be a valuable outreach tool, drawing a total of over 700 people to four shows. More than 20 young people were involved in the production and direction of the play, staged at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts in Burnaby.

Rev. Wayne Stretch, regional minister for the Synod of British Columbia, was typical of those attending when he called the production remarkable and inspiring. "Not only was it entertaining and inspirational for many hundreds in attendance," commented Mr. Stretch, "but it was also an incredible testimony to the commitment and dedication to gospel outreach on the part of a young, dynamic new church." Soojung Church opened in 2001.



Gale to head planned giving



Rev. Dr. Herb Gale, minister of Westminster-St. Paul's Church, Guelph, Ont., has been appointed by the Life and Mission Agency as associate secretary for planned giving, subject to the Presbytery of Waterloo-Wellington's agreement to release him from his pastoral ministry.

Before going to Westminster-St. Paul's in 1993, Mr. Gale was minister at St. James, Stouffville, Ont., (1984-1993) and associate minister at Shelby Presbyterian Church, Shelby, N.C. He is a graduate of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill (BA), Toronto School of Theology (M.Th.) and Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. (D.Min.). He has been a member and convener of the stewardship advisory committee and a member of the Stewards by Design planning committee. He has also taken a number of continuing education courses through the Ecumenical Stewardship Centre and at Knox College, Toronto.

Small U.S. churches more likely to have women pastors

Two-thirds of congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) often have fewer than 100 people at worship on Sundays, according to figures released by the denomination. New statistics show that 7,300 of the church's 11,000 congregations have 100 people or less at worship, with an average attendance of 48. They count for about 600,000, or 24 per cent, of the church's 2.5 million members. Only 39 per cent of small Presbyterian churches have a full-time pastor, and they are more likely to be women. Twenty-eight per cent of small churches have a woman pastor compared to 10 per cent of large congregations led by a woman.

The Church Herald

Rev. Robert MacMillan, former PCBC manager, dies at 87

Rev. Dr. Robert G. MacMillan, who served as general manager of the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation from 1976 to 1987, died March 14 in Burlington, Ont., at the age of 87. Dr. MacMillan also served as minister in Athelstan and Elgin, Que., and at Knox, Goderich, and Knox, Oakville, in Ontario.

Lind installed as director of Toronto School of Theology

A service for the installation and covenanting of Rev. Dr. Christopher Lind as the sixth director of the Toronto School of Theology was held at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Toronto, March 1. Dr. Lind was appointed to the position on July 1, 2003.

Prof. Lind has served as president of St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, and St. Andrew's

College, Saskatoon, since 2000. Prior to the amalgamation of these two schools, he had served since 1998 as president of St. Andrew's College, where he was a professor of church and society.



Photo by Michael Hudson

Presbyterian minister appointed a director of World Relief Canada

Rev. Phillip J. Robillard has been appointed director of church relations with World Relief Canada. Prior to taking up the position on April 12, Mr. Robillard was senior minister of Grace Church, Toronto. He also served as president of the board of directors of the Canadian Bible Society 1997-2001 and was an international board member of the North American Congress on Christian Philanthropy 2000-2002.



World Relief Canada was created in 1982 when the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada brought together Share Canada and the World Relief Commission of Canada. Through partnerships in local communities, WRC works in the areas of food aid security, emergency relief, small enterprise development, development education and skills training. Mr. Robillard will assist World Relief Canada in developing active partnerships with Canadian churches and WRC supporters.

"I have networked all of my life and maintained long-standing relationships with many denominations, parachurch ministries and other Christian groups," said Mr. Robillard. "My desire is to help bring churches and individuals together to make a difference in our world."

Hymn abides among top musical hallucinations

Abide With Me, a hymn penned in the mid-1800s, is among the tunes most commonly heard in musical hallucinations, according to British psychiatrist Dr. Nick Warner. Everyone occasionally has a catchy tune they just can't seem to get out of their heads but, in a musical hallucination, the song is heard as if it were really being played.

Dr. Warner, a psychiatrist based in Wales, told a Royal College of Psychiatrists conference in Liverpool that Abide With Me, a favourite at funerals, is a particularly recurrent tune in musical hallucinations. He and his colleague, Dr. Victor Aziz, studied 30 elderly people who experienced musical hallucinations. The tunes ranged from Don't Cry for Me Argentina to Yes, We Have No Bananas, but just over half heard some sort of religious music, either hymns or Christmas carols.

"Outstanding was the fact that the hymn Abide With Me turned up six times in 30 people," Dr. Warner said in an interview.

About one person in 10,000 people over 65 years old has musical hallucinations, which are most common in elderly people suffering from hearing problems.

Reuters



Grassroots initiatives help care for children like these, orphaned by AIDS, at an orphan centre in Blantyre, Malawi, supported by PWS&D.

Western world 'criminally negligent' in ignoring HIV/AIDS in Africa

Annihilation of a continent must come to an end

by Amy Sedlezky

Stephen Lewis, United Nations special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, was at Toronto's Calvin Church in February to speak about the AIDS pandemic and to promote the new Stephen Lewis Foundation. The foundation is designed to increase education and awareness of the disease, provide grassroots care and treatment for AIDS sufferers, and inspire Canadians to support the cause. In February, the foundation had already surpassed its goal of distributing a quarter million dollars to assist those affected by the virus and was well on the way to half a million.

"We have a historic pandemic that is sweeping across this world. It has no precedent in human history," said Mr.

Lewis. "It has already exceeded the Black Death of the 14th century; it will vastly exceed the number of deaths in both world wars in the 20th century. This is of a proportion that the world has never encountered or struggled with before."

About 27 million to 30 million people are living with HIV or AIDS in Africa, and 40 million worldwide. Although the majority of HIV/AIDS cases are concentrated in the sub-Saharan regions, Mr. Lewis said the potential for the disease to spread throughout the world should not be underestimated. It has moved to western Africa, including Rwanda, where thousands of women were infected when they were raped during the 1994 genocide. Thirteen per cent in the Ivory Coast

have the disease, Cameroon has reached nine per cent and Nigeria (a country with 123 million people) has crossed the five per cent threshold — the level at which a disease can unleash itself into the greater population.

China is another concern — where infections began largely through contaminated blood, and prevalence rates are unknown as remote provinces are inaccessible. India has the second-highest absolute numbers infected in the world with over four million people living with the virus. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are experiencing increasing numbers from injected drug use. Haiti, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic are also in trouble.

Words like “annihilation” and “extermination” are common when referring to how AIDS has swept across the African continent. The number of deaths has caused a loss of capacity and infrastructure; therefore, establishing care facilities, increasing education and awareness, and training people how to administer treatment is difficult. In

‘It’s like some warped, demented Darwinian target where the natural selection is focused on women’

Mozambique, 16 per cent of teachers between the ages of 15 and 49 are infected and are being lost at a rate of two per cent a year. Government offices are also suffering. Zambia’s minister of agriculture, the Hon. Mundia Sikatana, told Mr. Lewis he was the sole attendee at a recent meeting with the European Union.

“Why did you go alone?” Mr. Lewis asked. “Because so many senior people in my ministry have died,” Mr. Sikatana replied. “I have no one to take with me.”

Africa’s food supply is also a target. While travelling through Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho and Zambia between December 2002 and January 2003, Mr. Lewis came to a startling realization. Until then, it was assumed that famine in southern Africa was caused by drought and erratic climatic activity. However, Mr. Lewis saw a different culprit. “What you had were people who were too sick to farm the land. That household food security was declining day by day. That so many farmers had died it was impossible to sustain agricultural production. And when you have no food to consume, the virus consumes the body, and it moves rapidly towards death.”

Compounding the problem is the loss of certain age groups. While in Zambia, Mr. Lewis noticed that, except for a minority, the people there were either very old or very young. “People in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s simply weren’t there,” he said. “The productive age categories in the middle, which sustain the activities and operations of a country, had been methodically ransacked.”

The loss of the 20 to 50 age categories

means the number of orphans is disturbingly high. There are 11 million to 14 million orphans under the age of 15 living in sub-Saharan Africa. Over 20 million will lose a parent to AIDS by 2010. This phenomenon leaves grandparents to care for their dead children’s sons and daughters. One household Mr. Lewis visited was comprised of an 86-year-old husband, two wives in their 70s and 38 orphaned children between the ages of two and 16. “No one knows quite how to respond,” said Mr. Lewis. “All these kids are bewildered, angry, forlorn and often lonely; and they wander the landscape of the continent without food and without money to pay for school fees.”

If there are no grandparents to step in, child-headed households become the norm. Mr. Lewis describes the prevalence of such families as “discombobulating”

and referred to a study done in Swaziland, where the average age of children leading a household is six. “That’s not a household; it’s an abomination,” said Mr. Lewis. “But it’s also reality.”

Perhaps most disturbing is the devastating assault the virus has launched on women. Of the 27 million people living with the virus in Africa between the ages of 15 and 49, 58 per cent are women. Of the 10 million people between ages 15 and 24 living with HIV/AIDS in Africa, 67 per cent are women and girls. “Women are unbelievably and disproportionately affected and infected. There has never been a communicable disease that has been so focused on the vulnerability of one sex,” said Mr. Lewis. “It’s like some warped, demented Darwinian target where the natural selection is focused on women.”

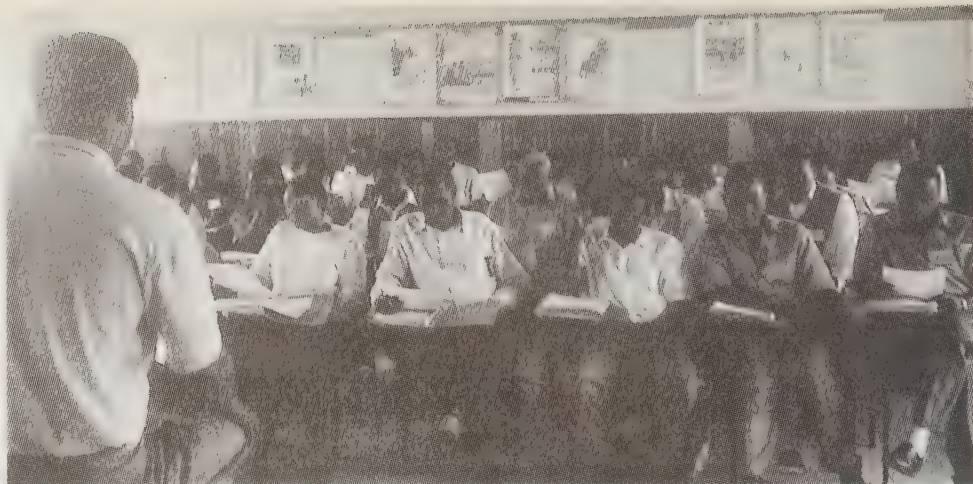


Stephen Lewis captivated his audience at Calvin Church, Toronto, with harrowing stories of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Photo by David Harris

The main reason for this is gender inequality. Women in Africa have virtually no property or inheritance rights — leaving them with no home or land when their husbands die from the virus and leaving them with nothing to sustain themselves if they are sick. They have less education, bear a larger work burden and are the victims of sexual violence and unfaithful male behaviour. Surprisingly, one of the greatest dangers is a regular partner. “Marriage is perhaps the most dangerous situation for women in Africa because they believe they are in a monogamous relationship but, in truth, large numbers of women are infected during marriage,” said Mr. Lewis.

In Uganda and Ghana, political leaders have recognized this situation and have taken steps to change it. After learning of the prevalence of the disease in his country, President Museveni of Uganda launched a marketing campaign aimed at men, using the catchphrase “No grazing.” He ordered every cabinet minister to mention HIV and AIDS during every public speech, and he does the same. Uganda’s prevalence rate has dropped to



Recognizing the importance of education in the fight against AIDS, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa conducts seminars for ministers and lay leaders to teach them how to educate their communities.

6.5 per cent — a huge decline since 1989 when urban areas hit a high of 18 to 20 per cent. Ghana’s prime minister, Kofi Busia, launched a similar campaign promoting condoms, using the slogan “If it’s not on, it’s not in.”

The church is an avenue for change that has recently come on board in many African countries. In Ethiopia — a country with 65 million people and an HIV problem that has not yet reached its

climax — the Orthodox Church is strong and influential and has 300,000 priests. When the majority of Ethiopians don’t have television and cannot read, the importance of the church in raising awareness is crucial. However, churches need support in promoting awareness. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church’s patriarch, Abune Paulos, told Mr. Lewis: “If I could get my priests to raise the issue every single Sunday, obviously we could

Toronto church opens doors to community

Speaker series aims to build bridges within the community

by Amy Sedlezky

“Our hope was to open the doors of the church more widely and to build bridges within the community, which we feel is an important commission of the church,” said Claire Barcik, community coordinator at Calvin Church, Toronto.

Having Stephen Lewis as the inaugural speaker for Calvin’s newly established speaker series was a coup. As the United Nations special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Mr. Lewis’s events calendar is booked some 200 days a year. He is also a Companion of the Order of Canada and former deputy executive director for UNICEF. His speech at Calvin on the AIDS pandemic in Africa left listeners shocked and touched — and

spurred to action. The audience dug deep into their pockets and raised \$15,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

“I think we all did a bit of learning about moving from a charity to a justice model of understanding social issues,” said Ms. Barcik. “I don’t think there was a person who left the church that evening who was not moved deeply to think about their own ability to have some impact on HIV/AIDS.”

The aim of the speaker series was to invite the wider community into the church and to focus on themes that would be of service to the community and enliven the faith of the congregation. Planning began for the Lewis event in February 2003, sparking great enthusi-

asm in the congregation for its “dream speaker.”

The 500 tickets sold quickly, even with minimal advertising. The church later received phone calls and e-mails from people expressing their thanks for hosting the event and their shock at some of the issues Mr. Lewis raised. The problem of orphans and the attack of HIV and AIDS on Africa’s women struck a chord. Rev. Ian McDonald, minister at Calvin, said he has been stopped in the street by people wanting to talk about the evening.

Mr. McDonald wanted the congregation to have basic information on the HIV/AIDS situation in Africa so, prior to the event, the church distributed reading material and held an information session

reach a tremendous number of people and be able to educate them into awareness and consciousness-raising. But my priests require training — they don't know enough themselves."

One of the biggest roadblocks to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS is finding resources for education, treatment and care.

'The disproportionate allocation of funds is something that really makes you wonder whether or not the world has lost its moral anchor'

The World Health Organization has recently committed to putting three million people into treatment by the year 2005 — called the 3 by 5 Initiative. For this project to be successful, the WHO needs \$200 million — split equally between 2004 and 2005. Included in the program is training 100,000 doctors, nurses, pharmacists, counsellors and community health workers to help with the care and treatment of HIV-positive people.

The treatment provided is anti-retroviral therapy — a three-in-one wonder drug that slows the progression of the disease. Of the 4.1 million people in sub-Saharan Africa who need treatment — determined by having a white blood cell count of less than 200 — roughly 70,000 to 100,000 people are in treatment, or about two per cent. The problem is that, once treatment begins, it must continue throughout a person's life. If interrupted, death is rapid. Therefore, inexpensive, generic drugs are critical.

"This is why the Canadian government is to be applauded [for introducing] legislation that will amend patents and will allow for the manufacture and export of generic drugs," said Mr. Lewis.

The general reluctance of the Western world to contribute to the Global Fund — a financial pool established by Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria — is something Mr. Lewis deems shameful and inexcusable. He compared the U.S. decision to pump half a trillion dollars into its defence budget to the \$2 billion it put toward the pandemic that

is taking three million lives each year. "The disproportionate allocation of funds — the money for conflict and not for compassion — is something that really makes you wonder whether or not the world has lost its moral anchor," he said.

The upcoming Canadian election is a prime opportunity to lobby the government to support HIV/AIDS work in Africa. "We have a moral imperative here as we have never had on this planet," said Mr. Lewis. "I have never, but never seen anything like this appalling cataclysm, which is engulfing a continent and threatening to spread, in large measure because the Western world has been insensitive, impervious, begrudging and criminally negligent. And it's time to end it." **R**

Presbyterian World Service & Development is involved in AIDS work around the world through education and awareness, development and relief. Visit www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd for more information, or www.stephenlewisfoundation.org to find out more about the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

on the pandemic. Mr. Lewis's personal experiences of an Africa ravaged by disease and death broadened the audience's understanding of the harsh reality facing the continent.

"We learned a great deal we didn't know before," said Joanne Stewart, a member of the speakers committee. "We've all heard him on TV, but the education we received that evening left us in awe and shocked that we are so fortunate and that it's such a terrible pandemic."

Organizing such a high-profile event had a positive impact on Calvin's congregation. "There was a certain amount of excitement about being involved in a project like this and seeing that their labour, dedication and their faith can contribute to the Stephen Lewis Foundation," said Mr. McDonald. "There's also been some sense of renewal in terms of a sense of purpose and, perhaps, in a few cases, a re-evaluation of priorities. After participating in that kind of an event and hearing what Mr. Lewis had to say made

them look at things differently — large and small — in their church lives and in the rest of their lives."

Ms. Barcik said the event had a unifying effect on the congregation and that enthusiasm for future events is huge. To direct some of the enthusiasm, Ms. Barcik drafted a letter supporting a

Inaugural speech by Stephen Lewis on AIDS in Africa raised \$15,000 for fund

generic drug bill and lobbying for a greater contribution from Canada to the Global Fund (a financial pool established by United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria). The letter will be sent to other congregations, asking them to sign it and send it to their local government offices.

"We wanted to respond with a bit more action," said Ms. Barcik. "Stephen

Lewis challenged us to think of various ways we could make a contribution, and financial was one. But we felt it would be appropriate to write a letter that would be addressed to Paul Martin around the Canadian government's commitment to the Global Fund, which many non-governmental organizations are suggesting is lower than it should be for our GDP."

Discussions on the next speaker in the series are ongoing. As many of Calvin's members are actively involved in organizations such as Evangel Hall and Habitat for Humanity, the issue of homelessness is a possible future topic.

"We didn't want to make it a one-night event because Stephen Lewis was coming," said Ms. Barcik. "We wanted to build toward it with education and learning. We've had a number of people call the church, who couldn't come [to the Stephen Lewis event] but wanted to make a donation. We really want to build on that." **R**

Toronto congregation helps community fight gun violence

Residents find solidarity at church rally

by Amy Sedlezky

Malvern has more young people than any area in Canada and it's also the most racially diverse," said Rev. Wayne Kleinsteuber, minister at Malvern Church in the north-east corner of Scarborough, one of Toronto's most troubled neighbourhoods. "It's a challenge, but a good challenge. And when it works, it works well. We learn from each other."

The violence that plagues the Scarborough community is something area residents want to end. To voice their concern and gain support from neighbours, police, religious leaders and city officials, Malvern Church hosted an anti-gun rally in March after the shooting of four men in three separate incidents that week — three of the four were killed and the other was injured and taken to hospital. One hundred area residents attended the rally, including the mother of a 24-year-old son who was shot and killed in 2001.

The rally was part of the church's series of meetings and community events that aims to bring the community together. A recent walk for peace through the neighbourhood began at the church, and the congregation also hosted a community barbeque in early April. Habitat for Humanity met at the church in late March to discuss plans to build 40 homes in the area — its largest project in Canada.

Getting people involved in solving the problems is a positive step toward change. "It's raising the sensitivity of political people," said Mr. Kleinsteuber. "And it helps the community. They can get out of their houses and see that others care and are concerned. It shows solidarity."

However, Mr. Kleinsteuber said that meetings and rallies are not enough.

Practical strategies are needed to make a difference. "We need money for community programs, recreation facilities and job opportunities for our young people," he said. Since most of the violence is gang-related, preventative strategies must be developed to keep youth from getting involved in gangs.

Mr. Kleinsteuber said it's encouraging to see police and city councillors building important partnerships with the groups

'It's raising the sensitivity of political people. And it helps the community. They can get out of their houses and see that others care'

Rev. Wayne Kleinsteuber

that can effect change. Dialoguing with other faiths is also important as many immigrants have a strong sense of faith. "Other Presbyterian churches have even phoned me to tell me they're praying for us," said Mr. Kleinsteuber. "It's wonderful. It lets people know they're not alone."

Founded 27 years ago as a mission church by Rev. Keith Boyer, Malvern fell on hard times when Mr. Boyer left in 1989. Until Mr. Kleinsteuber arrived three years ago, numerous ministers came and went. Malvern has now regained its footing and the church became self-supporting in April. "It's an exciting church to be a part of," said Mr. Kleinsteuber. "Our congregation is one-third African, one-third Caribbean and one-third white. It makes for exciting worship!"

Originally a Methodist minister, Mr. Kleinsteuber admits he had some reserva-

tions about coming to the troubled neighbourhood. Entering a community where 90 per cent of the population is non-white, he experienced some trepidation over whether or not his ministry would be accepted. "But the congregation warmly enfolded my wife and me into its arms."

Before coming to Malvern, Mr. Kleinsteuber was told by members of the congregation that they wanted to see the same person in the pulpit five years from then. Experiencing that stability now, the church can think of more than mere survival and focus on renewing its vibrancy. Average weekly giving has increased, and church attendance hovers firmly around the 100-range. Two new youth groups have formed, and several individuals are involved at a shelter for abused women. The congregation also sends Christmas presents to the children there each year.

The church also holds home prayer meetings, when the minister goes to a home for a service during a special event — such as a child graduating or a baby being born. Neighbours are invited to attend. "When we do these meetings, it is a chance for us to share, respectfully, who we are and what Christ means to us," said Mr. Kleinsteuber. "And it has been a means of growth for the church."

Despite the difficulties facing the neighbourhood, Mr. Kleinsteuber loves the multicultural face of his church and the community in which it is located. "It's enriching. When they're given permission to be themselves and to bring their gifts and know they'll be accepted, it's wonderful," he said. "We're a good fit for each other. They were ready to grow and to change and they just needed some constancy and leadership." ■

Plotting a course for the church's future

by Tom Dickey

When Rev. Scott McAndless, minister of Knox Church, Leamington, Ont., was asked by the Assembly Council's nominating committee two and a half years ago to serve as convener of the Long-Range Planning Committee, he must have thought, "Oi vey, do they have a wrong number!" He explained to the recruiter he was extremely cynical about long-range planning — especially on the national or

to God through the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit speaking through the people of the church."

To help the church find its purpose, the Long-Range Planning Committee introduced a workbook called, appropriately enough, *Finding God's Opportunities* at last year's General Assembly. The committee asked for responses from the commissioners and from Presbyterians across the country. At its meeting in January, the



'We have to find a very clear sense of what it is God wants us to do — what is our purpose — and commit ourselves to follow through on that no matter what it may cost'

Rev. Scott McAndless

denominational level. He even admitted to expressing reservations frequently about programs such as the FLAMES Initiative, which was created from six priorities identified by a think-tank convened by the Long-Range Planning Committee. Nothing worked. He was nominated anyway.

Since the day he reluctantly joined the committee, Mr. McAndless has gradually become a convert. "Our denomination is getting to a very crucial juncture," he says. "The demographics, the finances and our resistance to change are catching up to us and will soon overtake us. I think we are at the point that we have to find a very clear sense of what it is God wants us to do — what is our purpose — and commit ourselves to follow through on that no matter what it may cost." Mr. McAndless knows the committee's task is a daunting one, with a real possibility of failure. Yet he also has a strong sense that God has been guiding the committee's work because of its efforts "to listen

committee spent a lot of time reviewing and summarizing those responses — 126 pages of them. A report about the answers received will be presented to this year's General Assembly in June.

Committee member Rev. Ken Stright sums up the unofficial response to *Finding God's Opportunities*: "We must keep on keeping on." Mr. Stright, a minister in Nova Scotia, has some experience in trying to help the church discern its opportunities; he is the co-ordinator of the Year of Spirituality of the FLAMES Initiative (2003-2004).

The first thing people say is they want to be involved in the process, Mr. Stright says. They don't want five minutes at assembly or something superficial. They care passionately for the church and are anxious about its future. They are concerned about reaching those outside the church and making the necessary changes to attract and keep youth and young families in the church. If there is an overall

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theme, it might be “to run the race that is before us.” Based on the responses the committee has received, Mr. Stright suggests the church take a B-line forward: “Be biblical. Be positive. Be simple. Be relevant. Be responsible. Be lean.”

Committee member Rev. Alfred Lee, minister of Soojung Church, Port Coquitlam, B.C., and clerk of the Presbytery of Western Han-Ca, says his presbytery considers *Finding God's Opportunities* a chance for more openness and sharing, an opportunity to feel more connected to the national church. The presbytery has provided the Long-Range Planning Committee with five recommendations to speed up the process: increase the number of multi-ethnic staff at the national church offices, use liturgies that are more appealing and meaningful to the younger generation, find new ways to empower laypeople to participate in congregational

leadership, put more emphasis on short-term mission projects in individual congregations, adjust the balance in theological training so it is not as heavily weighted on the liberal side and is, instead, more Reformed-based and faithful to the church's doctrine.

In his work with the planning committee, Mr. Lee has heard many suggestions about where to find God's opportunities and how to seize them. He finds himself left with the question: Is the denomination willing to stretch its traditional position and policy? “God is challenging us to think and work creatively, enlarge our vision and dream as we listen to the people from the various corners of the church.”

Mr. McAndless says the Long-Range Planning Committee and the Assembly Council realize they are on notice. Those who have responded to *Finding God's*

Opportunities want to know what the result will be and where it will lead the church.

Based on the information it has gathered throughout the process, the Long-Range Planning Committee is proposing a framework for change called Building the Church that Needs to Be. This will be presented to General Assembly in June, with time for discussion. A number of other recommendations will be developed by the Long-Range Planning Committee and forwarded to the Assembly Council executive for further action and possible inclusion as a supplementary report to General Assembly.

There is a willingness to change and an understanding that the church can no longer settle for maintaining the status quo. Whatever the end result, simply slapping together a new program will not be enough. ■

True healing will take seven generations, Assembly Council told

by Tom Dickey

Long-range planning, personnel policy, and healing and reconciliation were among the topics of discussion when Assembly Council met at Crieff Hills Community, Puslinch, Ont., March 28-30. All three will be among the numerous matters that will be brought to the floor at the 130th General Assembly when it meets in Oshawa, Ont., June 6-11.

Rev. Scott McAndless, convener of the Long-Range Planning Committee, spoke to the council on the results of the *Finding God's Opportunities* questionnaire (see News, p.19). The committee received responses from 115 sessions, six presbyteries, one standing committee and 13 individuals, in addition to those from the table groups at the 2003 General Assembly.

The Personnel Policy Committee was asked to review the minimum stipend for professional church workers (defined as ministers, diaconal ministers, lay missionaries with special training and lay missionaries) to discern if stipend levels are dealing fairly with the needs of church workers. A significant percentage of ministers (43 per cent) receive the

minimum stipend. Many have reported experiencing financial hardship. At the same time, it is recognized that many congregations have limited resources. A review of minimum stipends will be commended to all sessions, boards of managers, presbyteries, synods, theological colleges and the Life and Mission



The church needs to build a lasting partnership with aboriginal people based on 'concrete, sustainable projects with measurable results'

Lew Ford

Agency. In other personnel matters, the policy for support of congregations during extended ministerial leave stemming from sexual abuse or harassment was referred to the Assembly Council executive. A workplace harassment policy, developed by the Personnel Policy Committee for staff at church offices, was approved by Assembly Council.

Lew Ford updated the council on the work of the Healing and Reconciliation

Task Force. The group has been holding a number of consultations with aboriginal people and others across the country — a process Mr. Ford describes as a “powerful” experience. The more we talk to people, the bigger the task becomes, he says. Aboriginal people are skeptical of terms like reconciliation, preferring

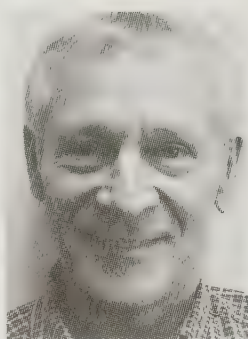
words such as respect, trust, honour and sharing. They see the answer lying in seven degrees of separation — it will take seven generations before true healing is achieved. The task force, or design team as it now sees itself

being redefined, continues to emphasize the need for awareness on the part of the church. With that in mind, June 20, the Sunday prior to National Aboriginal Day on June 21, is to be recognized as Aboriginal Day by the church.

Rev. George Malcolm, minister of Forbes Church, Grande Prairie, Alta., was nominated as Assembly Council convener to succeed David Jennings of North Vancouver. ■

Richard Fee elected moderator-designate

Rev. Richard Fee, executive director of Presbyterian World Service and Development for the past 11 years, has been elected moderator-designate for the 130th Gen-



eral Assembly. Elected from a field of three candidates in a vote conducted among all presbyteries, Mr. Fee's name will be placed before the assembly as the official nominee when General Assembly opens on June 6 in Oshawa, Ont. Although other nominations can be made from the floor, the moderator-designate has always been elected since the practice was instituted.

After graduating from Knox College in 1976, Mr. Fee was appointed by the Board of World Mission to work with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. He spent the next 16 years serving the church in Nigeria in a variety of ways, from parish minister to deputy clerk of the General Assembly. Through his work with PWS&D, Mr. Fee is also heavily involved in several ecumenical efforts, including: the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, and Action by Churches Together. Proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in the humanitarian sphere is a challenge he enjoys. Speaking the gospel in different situations is a task he expects a moderator to assume.

Mr. Fee believes the Presbyterian Church needs to discover and encourage ways of equipping older members to share their spirituality and faith with their children and grandchildren. The church's message must speak to those with emerging faith as well as those with mature faith. "The church must be the welcoming, discerning and loving presence of Christ right where people are living their lives — 24/7/365."

Remember *From Under a Blazing Aspen?* A new book is out by David Webber —

Like a Winter's Aspen

David Webber's monthly story in the *Presbyterian Record* is consistently one of the most popular sections, and for good reason. David is a superb storyteller, drawing the reader in as if chatting with friends in front of a late-night campfire. His astute observation of nature, especially the antics of animals, is engaging and often gently funny. From his observations, he draws such a natural parable for contemporary living that it seems as if God must have created the whole world to guide us on our journey — which is in fact what Christians believe, but too often forget. David Webber's stories remind and reassure us that God's overabundant, generous grace works in everything and through every situation. Regular readers will be delighted once again with this collection of stories, and new readers will find an uncommon touch here of contemporary spirituality that will stimulate and refresh them. I am proud of the *Record's* association with David and I highly commend this book to you.

— David Harris
(Editor/Publisher, *Presbyterian Record*)

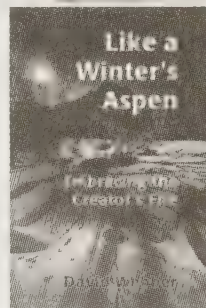
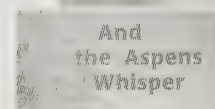
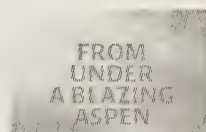
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David's books are available from:

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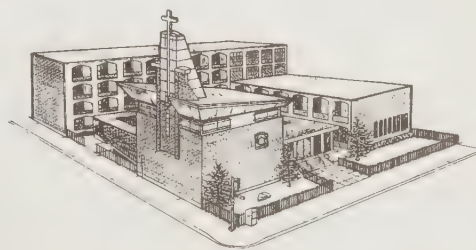
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United Church petition calls on government to do more about HIV/AIDS

More than 30,000 signatures were tabled in the House of Commons on March 9 calling on the Canadian government to do more to address the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. The petition was circulated by the United Church of Canada and was signed by members, adherents and friends of Canada's largest Protestant denomination.

The petition, known as the Signatures of Hope, began circulating last fall in conjunction with the United Church's two-year advocacy and fundraising initiative called the Beads of Hope Campaign. That campaign was launched in December 2002 in an effort to raise awareness of the growing crisis of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The denomination has received close to \$1.5 million in donations from individuals and congregations wanting to support the work of partner churches and organizations working in a variety of ways to address a humanitarian crisis that threatens millions of lives.

The Signatures of Hope petition focuses on four goals for the Canadian government to achieve:

- Cancel the burden of debt owed by developing countries that undermines their capacity to respond to HIV/AIDS
- Increase foreign aid and support for the United Nations Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria



Photo by Art Babych

Right Rev. Peter Short, the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, listens as Rev. Jim Sinclair, the church's general secretary, tells reporters why the federal government should do more to combat the global HIV/AIDS pandemic.

- Ensure that patents or trade-related intellectual property rights do not block access to life-saving medicines
- Double funding to the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS.

The petition was presented in the House of Commons in conjunction with a two-day visit to Parliament Hill by a United Church delegation that included the Moderator, Right Rev. Peter Short, general secretary Jim Sinclair and two representatives from United Church partner organizations in Kenya and Brazil.

Reopening of provincial trust fund will benefit theology students

In July 2003, the Ontario government quietly informed the province's universities it was reopening the Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund, which it had previously offered from 1997 to 1999. Under this plan, the government matches every dollar a university can secure from private sources to endow bursaries for students with adequate marks, Canadian citizenship, Ontario home addresses and limited funds. Universities will have access to the allocated money no matter who governs Ontario during the current decade.

Unlike a student loan, which must be repaid, or a scholarship that honours achievement or ability, a bursary aims squarely at alleviating need; consequently,

recipients' names are rarely made public. A large enough gift, however, secures the right to this information and, if desired, for the donor of record, along with two other people, to name the bursary and to specify (within reason) terms for awarding it.

Knox College, the only Ontario college devoted to training Presbyterian ministers, can receive matching funds because it is affiliated with the University of Toronto. While only students from Ontario can benefit from bursaries supported by matching money, each Ontario student helped from this source aids a student from elsewhere by freeing up an existing bursary with no geographical restriction.

Setting up a bursary at Knox costs about \$10,000, but any amount given to the general bursary fund is eligible for matching funds, and tax receipts are available. If desired, bursaries can be directed toward special areas such as rural ministry or evangelism. Theology-bound students attending other universities (before entering Knox, a student must earn at least one degree in arts or some other area) can also benefit from bursary funds given to those universities.

For more information about bursaries at Knox College, contact: Director of Development, Barbara Hepburn, 59 St. George St., Toronto, ON M5S 2E6; 416-978-0139; or b.hepburn@utoronto.ca.

Reachout For Life now reaches larger audience

The television program *Reachout For Life*, with Presbyterian host Rev. Dr. Larry Brice, is now available to a larger audience, thanks to an expanded broadcast range for the CTS (Crossroads Television System) network. Beginning on April 6, CTS became available to the London, Ont., area on Channel 14 and on basic cable service. Viewers in the Ottawa area have been receiving CTS since May 4, over the air on Channel 32, as well as on basic cable service. The network now has coverage in 90 per cent of Ontario and a potential audience of more than half the country.

Reachout For Life is produced at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church, Toronto, and features many Presbyterian guests as well as Christian leaders from across Canada and overseas. According to Dr. Brice, the program's goal is "to provide a thoughtful and practical presentation of Jesus Christ, with the invitation to know this Lord discussed by the guests." *Reachout For Life* can be seen on CTS across much of Canada every Sunday at 2:30 p.m. (Eastern).



An interview with Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, principal of Knox College, Toronto, seen here with Rev. Dr. Larry Brice, will be televised on CTS, July 11, 2004, at 2:30 p.m. (Eastern).

B'nai Brith's 2003 audit reveals anti-Semitism in Canada on rise

The League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada has released the 2003 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, its annual study of anti-Semitism in the country. The audit indicates that anti-Semitic activity in Canada is still on the rise, with

'What was once seen as offensive and unacceptable is now being viewed as less serious and even routine'

a 27.2 per cent increase country-wide in 2003 compared to 2002. In total, 584 incidents were reported — the highest number in the 21-year history of the audit. Furthermore, the number of reported incidents doubled from 2001 to 2003.

According to Rochelle Wilner, national president of B'nai Brith Canada, the victim impact statements included in the audit demonstrate the lasting harmful

effects of anti-Semitism. "In spite of this, over the past few years, the bar has been raised on what victims themselves, as well as society in general, are prepared to tolerate," Ms. Wilner says. "A process of desensitization, both within and outside the Jewish community, has meant that what was once seen as offensive and unacceptable is now being viewed as less serious and even routine."

Of the incidents reported during 2003, 23 targeted synagogues and 22 other Jewish communal buildings, 111 included threats, and 34 were specifically directed against children (22 involving school facilities). Incidents were also reported on university campuses, in the workplace, on the Internet and by e-mail.

Several anti-Semitic incidents occurred in the Greater Toronto Area a little more than a week later, including the desecration of synagogues, schools, community centres, private homes and a cemetery.



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Nobel Peace Prize winner says Islam is a religion of peace and equality

GENEVA — Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi of Iran has strongly defended Islam as a religion of peace, while also saying Islam has been wrongly used to justify the oppression of women. "Islam is a religion that is against terrorism and violence," said Ms. Ebadi at a press conference in Geneva at the International Labour Organization where she was to take part in a panel discussion to mark International Women's Day (March 8).

"What happened in Bosnia, we did not say, 'It was Christians.' All the things that happen in Palestine, we do not put it at the door of Judaism," said Ms. Ebadi, who asked why Islam should be blamed for the violent actions of individuals who claim to follow that faith. "It is not the religion of Islam that supports terrorism."

Responding to a question about nuclear weapons, which Iran has been accused of developing, Ms. Ebadi said that

no country needs such weapons. "You cannot save humanity through nuclear weapons. What saves humanity is respect for human rights and democracy."

Ms. Ebadi was named the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, an award that has given her a "loudspeaker" to be heard more clearly not only in Iran but also on the international stage. "It is in that way that I can speak out about the situation of women not only in Iran but in all Muslim countries," said Ms. Ebadi. Defending Islam as a religion that believes in equality and human rights, she said the position of women in Islamic countries is due to the patriarchal system there. "With a correct



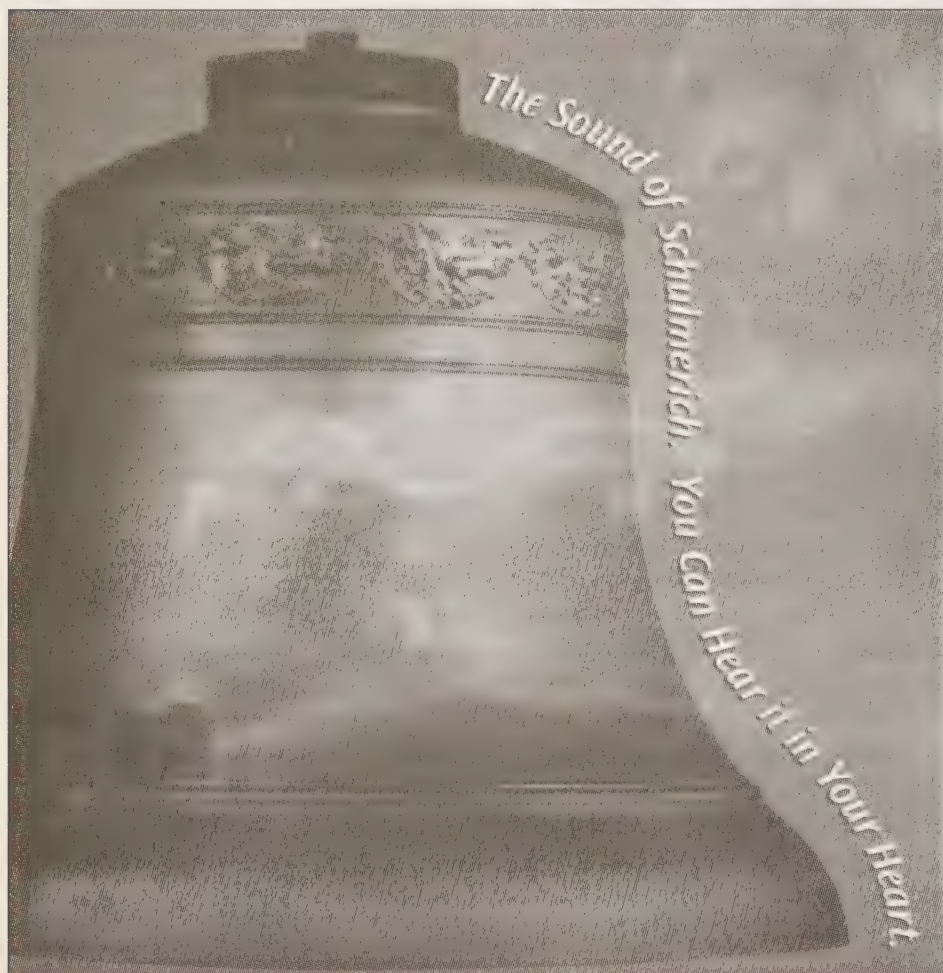
understanding of Islam, one can be for human rights and the equality of women," she said.

Still, the situation of women in her own country is not "perfect or good," she noted, and many discriminatory rules are in place. She strongly criticized recent elections in Iran, in which many reformers were forbidden

from standing, and said the will of the people had been "nullified."

Born in 1947, Ms. Ebadi was one of Iran's first female judges and served as president of the city court of Tehran from 1975 to 1979. She was forced to resign after the 1979 Islamic revolution and now teaches at the University of Tehran.

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World Council of Churches' Kobia seeks blessing at Kenyan birthplace

NAIROBI — Songs and ululation rang out when Rev. Sam Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, celebrated his first 100 days in office at Miathene village, Meru, the place he was born, near Mount Kenya. There he sought blessings from his parents, relatives and friends before embarking on the rest of his work as the WCC's first African leader.



Photo © Peter Williams/WCC

"We thought that it would be the best way to start this ministry, by first going back to where we came from," he told the congregation of Lavington United Church, Nairobi, on April 11, after arriving from Miathene some 300 kilometres northeast of Nairobi. "I feel much empowered because of the support I have received from Kenyans, the churches and the government. This now energizes me to embark fully on my work."

On Easter Sunday, the leader of the world's largest church grouping joined the Lavington congregation, where he worshipped for 10 years before joining the WCC. "Today, we are living in a broken world, where violence has reached most threatening proportions ... Today, humanity is hostage to fear," Mr. Kobia said in his Easter Sunday sermon.

Earlier, at a commemorative lecture for the centenary celebrations of St. Paul's Theological College at St. Andrew's Church, Nairobi, Mr. Kobia called Africa "a vital force in the universe." Peace and liberation of the world is not possible if Africa is engulfed in anguish, he said.

"The new generation born presently under the burden of AIDS will give Africa new insight to the journey of the cross and momentous awakening of the spirit," Mr. Kobia said, asserting that Africa has the means to redefine itself.

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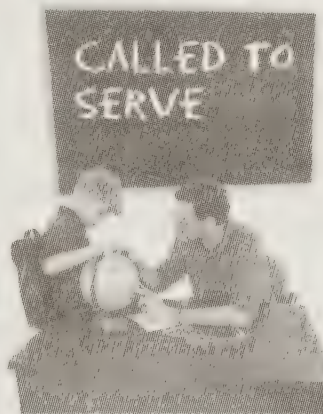
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Churches find new ways to talk to our culture about God and life

by Alex MacLeod

For those who want to chat about God, religion, and the meaning of life over a pint of Guinness ...

— *Spirituality on Tap*

Come and connect with your Creator, with your neighbours, and with the sacred part of you that seeks affirmation and peace ... consider the relaxing benefits of yoga, meditation, shiatsu & simple colour changes around your home.

— *For Your Inspiration*

Spirituality on Tap and For Your Inspiration are hardly typical names for churches but, as these quotes from their websites indicate, there's little normal about either Toronto-based initiative. In the past couple of years, these two experiments in innovative, bridge-building Christian spirituality have bucked the now decades-old trend of churches closing in downtown Toronto.

The electoral district of Trinity-Spadina surrounds the Annex neighbourhood and the University of Toronto's St. George campus, extending south to the Lakeshore. Census Canada results from 2001 suggest this is one of the most irreligious neighbourhoods in Canada, where a majority of its residents identify themselves as being of "no religious affiliation." Nonetheless, in 2002, the Presbytery of East Toronto chose this area for what was then called the Greenhouse Project, a new Christian community focused on healing and hospitality. By the summer of 2003, Rev. Jane Swattridge had been hired to lead the new church development.

The challenge of finding ways to develop "new church" lies in the number of

different approaches that may be taken in starting over. Christians often have a difficult time jettisoning their assumptions about what church should look like, while others less religiously inclined seem to associate "church" and "Christian" with an unappealing exclusivism.

Ms. Swattridge explains: "We've got to get back to the basics. It begins with conversation — listening and responding. We have these amazing stories to tell but can't do it on our own terms these days. If you come to For Your Inspiration, you'll hear stories and you'll be asked to share yours too. The idea is to help people wonder about the sacred in their lives, to encourage them to open up to God."

While For Your Inspiration has regular meetings, they aren't held on Sunday mornings. Awakening happens early on Mondays, mid-week Centring is offered and weekly Downloading takes place Friday afternoons. The house Ms. Swattridge rented on Brunswick Ave. aims to be a place where people can drop in and feel welcome. Its large living room is designed to be comfortable and conducive to conversation.

"You just can't start with the usual church stuff," says Ms. Swattridge. "If I raised the possibility of having a traditional worship service or Bible study with the people who come here, they would flip out because they don't know what that is. The very language we use is foreign to them, and so we have to come up with new ways of talking about and explaining what we do."

Many people are suspicious of the church. Sometimes they have been hurt by Christians in the past. For Your Inspiration hopes to be a source of healing for the wounded. According to Ms. Swattridge: "The impression is widely held that the church is anti-women or that it's homophobic. I'm always talking about how radical and embracing Jesus was in his attitude toward women. People expect the church to judge them or reject them and so they often decide to engage in some pre-emptive rejection of their own."

Spirituality on Tap takes the conversation about God into downtown space where some may think it doesn't belong: the bar scene. Andrew Williams, a thirty-something marketing director and an elder at Bayview Glen Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Toronto, started the initiative with four friends after they realized no one they knew who was interested in exploring spirituality was prepared to follow that impulse to church. "We began to see that if we were going to be able to invite our friends into a conversation about the purpose of life, we'd have to make sure it happened on neutral ground. It would have to be in a safe place, somewhere that was removed from church."

They hoped to use a coffee shop in a large bookstore for their venue, seeing books and coffee as the perfect combination for getting people talking; but, when that possibility fell through, they looked around for other options. Among the various sites they visited, the Madison Avenue Pub, a short walk from U of T, provided the ideal relaxed setting.

"Doing Spirituality on Tap in a pub has generated a lot of interest," says Mr. Williams. "The media always latches onto that as a gimmick. On the other hand, people from our churches are concerned about the issue of alcohol. There's actually very little drinking that happens

in the end. But we've definitely found that doing this in a pub is one of the biggest draws. It's so unexpected, it communicates to people that we're doing something different — that it's not about rules, that we're not afraid to meet people where they're at."

Spirituality on Tap has run five 11-week courses since September 2002. They began by using the Alpha program, an introduction to Christian belief developed by an Anglican church in London, England, which thousands of churches around the world have adopted with considerable success over the past 10 years (including more than 500,000 Canadians). But Mr. Williams and his team have recently been experimenting with more custom-designed and homegrown ways of getting into the topic of spirituality.

'People came to us and said they loved being able to talk about God and the big questions of life'

"From the beginning," he says, "people came to us and said they loved being able to talk about God and the big questions of life. At the same time, they challenged us by pointing out that we were advertising Spirituality on Tap but we were really offering Christianity on Tap. Alpha gets right into Jesus from the outset. In effect, the message we were conveying over and over again was 'Buy a Mercedes' when the group we had were still asking themselves 'Do I really need a car?' So we stopped using Alpha and started to rethink everything."

About 80 people, mostly young adults in their 20s and 30s, come on the first night of each series but, by the second and third weeks, numbers have usually tapered off to 40 or so. Spirituality on Tap organizers would like to see less of a decline early and are making adjustments to encourage those who leave early to stick it out for longer. Another priority is the ending of the course when participants, some of whom emerge as new Christians, are encouraged to make the leap into regular involvement with a faith community. However, this transition — from pub to church — has not gone smoothly.

"There was a backlash," Mr. Williams said, "when we tried to focus on getting

people to make a decision about whether to accept Christ or not. In response, we began to emphasize baptism more. We spent less time dwelling on our sinfulness and the need for a dramatic decision; instead, we encouraged people to participate in the Christian life even if they didn't have it all figured out, even if they hadn't received answers to all their questions. We found they were keen to get involved in mission right away. In the process, we realized people today tend to belong before they believe. And we let God worry about the deeper transformation."

People who completed the course and some who did not speak of how refreshingly different Spirituality on Tap was from what they expected of institutional religion. Gillian Parekh, a Toronto teacher in her late 20s, emphasized the role of small groups. While she enjoyed the talks on such questions as why there is suffering, what the different world religions believe and who Jesus was, the discussion with peers was most memorable.

"The conversation was really open," she recalls. "The personal stuff wasn't frowned upon as it might be in Christian circles. I was surprised that nothing was deemed unacceptable."

Heikki Walden, a real estate agent in his 30s, especially appreciated that the church was rarely if ever mentioned at Spirituality on Tap. "It wasn't about recruiting members for church. It wasn't about telling us where we should be. Faith has to reflect the people who are the church and their voice rather than insisting that people fit into the mould of the pre-existing institutional church."

Spirituality on Tap and For Your Inspiration reflect the people who make up the changing culture around us. Creative risk-taking and experimentation will come as Christians recognize the gap between a growing interest in spirituality and the church's diminishing ability to attract people from outside its walls. The way ahead lies with bridge-builders such as these. **R**

For more information: www.fyicanada.ca
and www.spiritualityontap.com.

Alex MacLeod lives in downtown Toronto where he works with young adults at Knox Church (Spadina).

The delights of being a

by Pamela Shires Sneddon

Sharing the joys
of Sarah
and Elizabeth

‘Do an underdog, Mommy!’ Katie called out as she settled herself into the swing. She wanted me to lift her high, then run beneath the swing as I pushed.

‘I don’t do underdogs,’ I reminded her.

‘Oh, yeah,’ said Katie with four-year-old matter-of-factness, ‘that’s because you’re an old mom. Only *new* moms do underdogs!’

Katie’s casual comment tore through my self-esteem like a toddler through a department store dress rack. Who, me? An old mom?

I was 41 when Katie’s twin brothers were born and 44 when Katie arrived, but I’d never had the fact I was older than most of her friends’ mothers laid out so bluntly. Thanks to Katie, I spent most of my away-from-home time in the company of 20- or 30-somethings. In my mind, I had become 30 years old again — or so I had imagined.

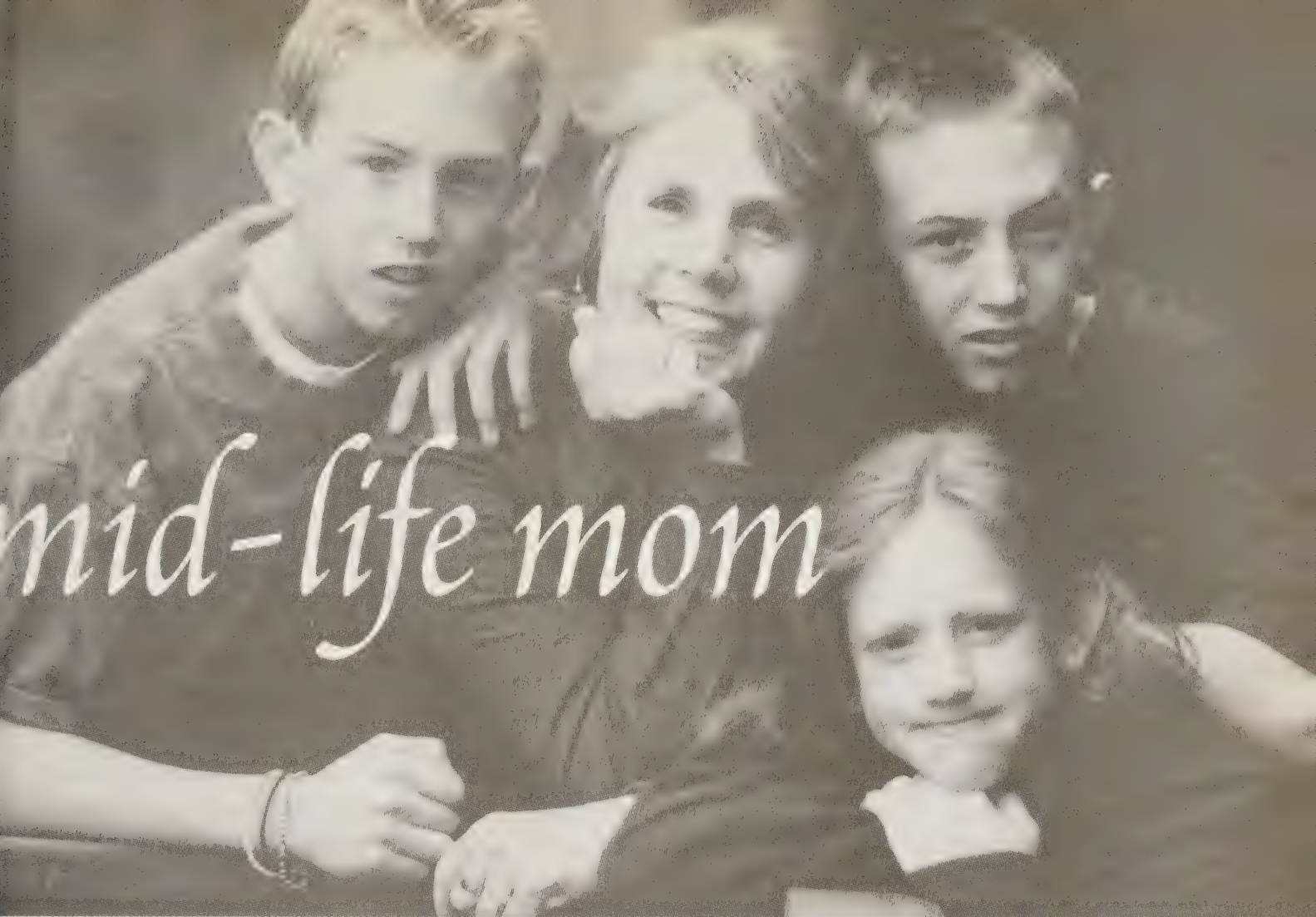
Katie’s three little words crumpled that image. The lines around my eyes reappeared, my hair became greyer and I was again, well, an old mom.

Since that day, I’ve become an even older mom. Katie is now a teen. Along the way, I’ve discovered some unique and delightful things about being a mid-life mom.

Several pivotal Bible characters were born to mothers past 40. Through Isaac, the long-awaited son God promised to Abraham and Sarah, came the nation of Israel. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus’ ministry. Both these great men of God were born not only to older mothers but to women long past child-bearing age.

For present-day mid-life moms, however, having a baby after 40 is physically riskier. A recent study revealed that 47 per cent of first-time mothers in their 40s had a Caesarean section — twice as many as women in their 20s. Pregnancy-related diabetes, high blood pressure and premature delivery are also substantially higher for older mothers.

For many, adjusting to changes in lifestyle is also a major hurdle. Rita Kenner, editor of *Midlife Mommies*, an online support community for first-time moms over 35, was a videotape editor used to stress and deadlines when she had her first baby at 43. ‘Working on a newscast meant there was an end in sight. Once



Pam Sneddon with her children in 1999: Russell (left), Andrew and Katie.

the show is off the air, you're alone," she says. "But taking care of an infant is a never-ending marathon of feedings, diaper changes, rocking and crying — all with very few commercial breaks."

For those coming to parenthood from a fast-paced career, it may be hard to remember there is value in putting a puzzle together 10 times or dipping every french fry and every bit of hamburger in ketchup at a 45-minute McDonald's lunch. As one mid-life mother put it: "Five years from now, your kids won't remember the night you left the dishes in the sink; but they'll treasure forever the memory of the walk you took with them to look at the night sky." And so will you.

But according to Christa Taylor-Jones, author of *Midlife Parenting*, one of the biggest challenges for older mothers is a sense of isolation. "Their friends either had grown kids, teenagers or no kids," she says of those she interviewed. I was surprised to enter this lonely land myself when I had my twins in my 40s. For my same-age friends now at the end of their

child-rearing years, my sleepless nights or toilet training woes were a thing of the past. Lunch out for me meant calculating whether it was worth the time spent hunting down a sitter, the possible last-minute cancellation if my child got sick or the chance the sitter wouldn't show. It

A mid-life mom has challenges a younger mom doesn't. But she also has some pluses

seemed more trouble than it was worth. As a result, I often felt my connection to adult life had been severed.

However, by the time Katie arrived three years later, I had learned I didn't need to remain isolated. While it took effort, I found a bonus of mid-life motherhood to be friendships formed with younger moms. This intermingling of generations has two-way benefits. If one is a veteran mom, it's a great opportunity

to encourage newer mothers when they feel angst over a two-year-old who won't share or a four-year-old's defiance. On the other hand, if one is a first-time older mother who tends to treat her offspring like the pearl beyond price, a younger mom's more casual attitude can loosen up a too protective parenting style.

Perhaps more insidious than the physical and emotional aspects of feeling alone is the danger of spiritual isolation. When quiet moments are a rarity, it's tempting to let go of time with God. For me, involvement in a women's Bible study that had a children's program rejuvenated my spiritual walk as well as helped fill my need for meaningful fellowship with other adults.

A mid-life mom has challenges a younger mom doesn't. But she also has some pluses — experience and wisdom are on her side, not to mention life skills she never knew she'd need.

At the performances of Katie's sixth-grade play, *Bye Bye Birdie*, I was the single exception to a no-parents-allowed-

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backstage rule. The reason? I was the only mom who had first-hand experience with '50s and '60s hairdos. One by one, I backcombed and crafted flips, French twists, ponytails and Big Hair with an expertise that amazed even me.

The reality is, regardless of how I might feel as an older parent, I'm kept from focusing on age-related aches and pains by the demands of those who assume I have limitless energy. No matter how hard a day or how tired a mom might be, a teenager can always find something for her to do — or to worry about. Scripture records that Sarah laughed when she learned she would have a son. It doesn't tell us the *real* reason God gave her laughter. It was to equip her for the time when Isaac would turn to her and say, "Mom, about your car ..."

Sometimes when I've struggled through a long night of worrying about my teens, I'm tempted to envy the empty nests of my same-age friends. Then I think about what I would have missed. I wouldn't have known a baby's touch could be as sweet to a 40-year-old mom as to one in her 20s — maybe sweeter, because an older mom is more aware of time's fleeting nature. I would never have shared screams of laughter on Disneyland's Splash Mountain unless begged by a 12-year-old daughter to ride with her. I wouldn't have experienced the exuberance of a teenage son bursting into the kitchen shouting, "I need a hug!" rejuvenating me at a time when I was ready to retire from motherhood. And what other 50-something mom gets to stand at the back of a pulsating, darkened auditorium and watch her son play the drums?

At those times, I'm able to step back, remember Psalm 127:3 and truly grasp that "children are a gift of the Lord." Then I thank God for those lives he's brought into mine, for the opportunity to share the timeless mother-joy of Sarah and Elizabeth. And, sometimes, with a sudden unexplained burst of vim and vigour (or maybe a Starbucks triple grande mocha Valencia), I even feel energetic enough to attempt an underdog. **R**

Pamela Shires Sneddon is a leader and speaker in an interdenominational women's Bible study and works part-time in a sixth-grade classroom in Santa Barbara, Calif.

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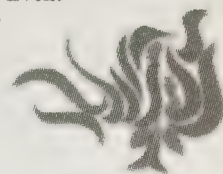
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people & places

The congregation of Calvin, Miramichi, N.B., held a surprise presentation for Alena MacKinley in recognition of her 60th year of dedicated service as church treasurer. Seen with her following the presentation are clerk of session Harold Cameron (left) and Rev. Wallace Whyte of Toronto.



Elders John Hall (second from left) and Jack Mahaffy were presented with certificates of recognition and Bibles in honour of their 40 years of service at Weston Church, Toronto, by elders Elizabeth Heath (left) and Mildred Chamberlain. The two men also received a standing ovation from the congregation.

The PC (Pie and Cabbage Roll) Group at St. Andrew's, Tillsonburg, Ont., presented a cheque for \$500 toward the new dialysis unit in Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital to Ed DeSutter, chair of the dialysis committee. The presentation was made in honour of the late Jo Wild, a member of St. Andrew's who would have benefited from the availability of a local dialysis unit. The PC Group meets twice a month to make apple pies and cabbage rolls to raise funds for the improvement of the church environment. Making the presentation to Mr. DeSutter were: (clockwise from left) Ann Dyksterhuis, president; Dianne MacKeigan, secretary; Irene Gara, founding member; Connie Williams, founding member; Dorothy Dahm, treasurer. (Photo: Tillsonburg News)



Rev. Anne-Marie Jones, minister of St. Andrew's, Belleville, Ont., and Rev. Dr. George Vais prepare to cut the cake celebrating the 172nd anniversary of St. Andrew's.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Unfortunately, we cannot return any photographs. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

During the cold of winter, the children of Calvin, North Bay, Ont., modelled some of the summer clothing that was taken, along with hand-knitted items, to Malawi for distribution at the Blantyre Orphan Centres by two members of Calvin, Sandra Beattie and Linda MacLennan. The Kid-to-Kids mission project of the church school had previously sent \$2,000 to the orphan centres.



Flora Morrison's 95th birthday was celebrated by the congregation of Wexford Church, Scarborough, Ont., last year. Standing beside Flora is Rev. Mary Bowes.

Margaret Stevens (second from right) is joined by (L-R) Klaas Keizerwaard, Tim Neuman, Colin Brown and Anne Neuman at a reception honouring her on her retirement as editor of the *St. Andrew's Voice*, the newsletter of St. Andrew's, Aurora, Ont.



Kathryn Mayberry of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank was the guest speaker at the Thanksgiving service at St. Andrew's, Kitchener, Ont. She is pictured (left) with Rev. Colleen Smith, associate minister, Christian education, and Renee Biewenga-Hyams of the national/international outreach committee.

▶ The Calgary-Macleod Presbyterial held its 90th annual meeting in February. Gathered around the anniversary cake are past and current presidents: (L-R) Marg Befus, Joan Cruickshank, Lisbeth Duncan, Heather Swaney, Joanne Watson and Priscilla Towers.



◀ A plaque was presented recently to Fred Charman of Jubilee Church, Stayner, Ont., in recognition of his 35 years as an elder. Making the presentation was clerk of session Don McNabb (left).



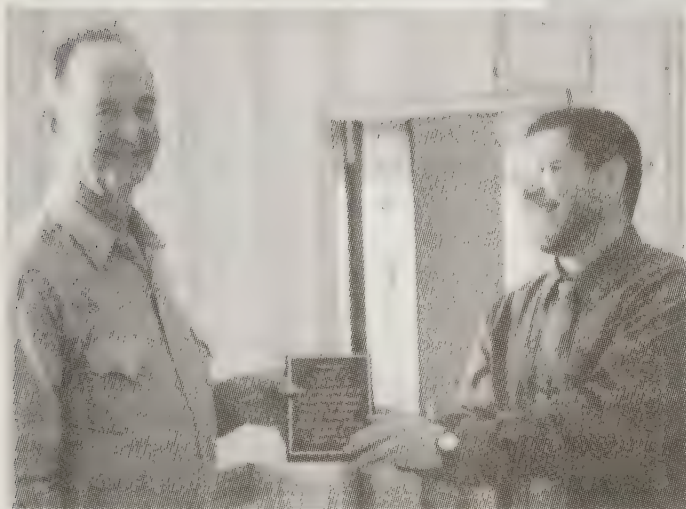
The congregation of St. Andrew's, Owen Sound, Ont., celebrated Rev. Dr. Ted Creen's 20 years of ministry with a special service and reception. Several church and community members — and a troupe of puppets — paid tribute to Ted. He was presented with a drawing of the church and a kilt in the St. Andrew's tartan. Pictured with Ted are:

▽ David Edwards (left), convener of the board; clerk of session Faye Lemon; and associate minister Rev. Scott Sinclair (right).



▲ The youth group of Brant Hills Church, Burlington, Ont., presented a cheque for \$640.65 to Laura Harper, representing Sleeping Children Around the World. Ms. Harper spoke to the congregation on behalf of the organization, which provides bed-kits to children in underdeveloped and developing countries. The money was raised through a craft show held last November and December. Joining Ms. Harper with the cheque are Andrew Collins and Jennifer Smart. (Not shown is youth group member Matthew Smart.)

▶ The congregation of St. James'- St. Andrew's Church, Gravel Hill Road, Monkland, Ont., celebrated its 140th anniversary recently. Preparing to cut the anniversary cake are: (L-R) Rev. Jeff Smith, guest speaker and former minister; Dorothy Crawford and Stewart McIntosh, the two most senior members of the congregation; Rev. Mark Bourgon.



◀ Jerry Umbach (left) was presented with a plaque by the session and congregation of St. Stephen's, Creston, B.C., on his retirement after 14 years as clerk of session. Making the presentation was Rev. Ron Benty.



Participants in the Sr./Srs. program at Graceview Church, Etobicoke, Ont., are pictured enjoying a recent luncheon. The lunch events include speakers and entertainment of
◀ special interest to seniors.

▶ The Bistro Boys of St. Andrew's, Lethbridge, Alta., demonstrate they can add some spice to the congregation in more ways than one. When they're not singing, the Boys are busy cooking, catering four to six functions annually — including the Christmas pageant supper, which has an average attendance of 250. The group's 20 members range in age from 12 to 85.



Polarized opinions won't bring justice to the Middle East

Christians, whether progressive or conservative, must support peace-loving Arabs and Jews

I cannot remember being so restless about an international situation. I am a Christian, with three Jewish grandparents. I receive anti-Semitic hate mail every week. To the bigots, my faith in Jesus is not as important as my Jewish blood. This I can tolerate. What I find more troubling is the frequent polarization of Christian opinion on the subject of Israel and Palestine.

For those out there who believe there is no longer any anti-Semitism, the one thing I am sure of is that you are not Jewish. Anti-Semitism is seldom found in Christian circles but has regained a foothold elsewhere. To overestimate this would be foolish, but to underestimate it would be positively stupid.

Today, Christians have to be able to discuss Israel without fear or prejudice. That is, we must be able to criticize Israeli policies without being accused of anti-Semitism. But on the other hand, we must only criticize Israeli policies, if that is what we choose to do, if we are free of anti-Semitism.

Within the church, there is what can be broadly termed the Christian progressive approach. Activists are seen on television marching with Palestinians and calling on Israeli soldiers to think again. Fair enough. But they have to understand a few things.

Jews ask where these Christian progressives were during the Holocaust, when a little over a third of them in Germany actually served in the military. Christians did not, repeat, did not produce the Holocaust. But the Holocaust did occur in what was known as Christendom. Many are the names of Christian

heroes who resisted, but more are the names of those who did not.

Where, they continue, were the Christian progressives when 800,000 Jews were thrown out of Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Jordan and elsewhere? The families of these people had lived in the Arab worlds for centuries but were expelled with only the clothes on their back. Many were killed.

Christians must look for plausible and genuine alternatives to violence, whoever is the victim


And why, they also ask, are there so few Christian progressives in Syria or Algeria, where Arabs are treated appallingly and slaughtered? An entire village wiped out in the former, hundreds of thousands killed in the latter. Frankly, if a group of eager young people went to these two countries to protest, they might not get out again. No media to take pictures, no rule of law, no free courts.

A good, fine Mennonite woman wrote to me recently about Israel. She wrote of Easter, and how peace should descend at such a time. Amen to that. But empathy is vital here. She should know that Easter was traditionally the time of greatest fear for Jewish people in Europe. The local priest would fire up the congregation, and rape, murder and pogrom would result. No young people then standing between Jewish villagers and drunken mobs.

Yet none of this can allow Israel the right to do whatever it wants. Terrorists

must be stopped, but most Palestinians have no link to terror and simply want the same as their Israeli cousins: a safe and free state, self-worth, food and warmth, a future. Because of prophecy, because of the biblical and moral need for a Jewish homeland, many Christians dehumanize Palestinians. They ought to remember that, apart from anything else, a large number of Palestinians are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes, Arabs — just like North Americans and Europeans — in relationship with Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah. But whatever their faith, they are children of God.

A Palestinian Christian friend told me the story of a pastor in the West Bank whose town suddenly came under Israeli fire. He ran with his daughters to a safe place. The girls became hysterical. Sheer terror. When the bombardment stopped, the pastor went back to his home and turned on the television. By chance there was an American evangelist interviewing an Israeli officer who had been directing the shelling of the pastor's town. The American was, in effect, wishing the Israeli luck in the attack and explaining that Christians were behind him.

Well they're not. And must not be. They must be behind peace. They must seek to understand both sides and fight anti-Semitism as well as anti-Arabism. They must look for plausible and genuine alternatives to violence, whoever is the victim. They must pray, must love, must act. Salem, Shalom, Him — who must be weeping for his beloved homeland. 

Michael Coren is a broadcaster and author. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com.

Eight simple rules for dating my son

*Something happened a few short years ago:
the roles reversed*

I've been thinking a lot about teenagers now that we have three of them hanging around the house eyeing our car keys. But in all honesty, we love these days. Sure we have to replace the fridge light bulb more frequently and I haven't controlled the remote for months, but teenagers teach us much about life and love if we will watch and listen. Lately I've noticed they're too old to do things kids do and too young to act like adults. So they do things no one else would dare.

I suppose part of our success as parents depends on our ability to remember being a child ourselves, and I recall well the teenage years. I remember the day

Part of our success as parents depends on our ability to remember being a child

in 10th grade when a blonde named Ramona moved in next door and how my science, math and geography grades began to plummet in the wake of her presence. I pursued her across the vast ocean of courtship by phone, on foot and in my father's car until she caught me. We've been married now for 20 years.

Back in those primitive times before the invention of helpful objects like cell-phones that work under water, boys chased girls. We did this fluently. We planned for it, we paid for it and we preened for it. But something happened a few short years ago: the roles reversed. Girls began chasing boys. Aggressively. Like hungry lionesses preying on limping antelope. They started yelling out car windows at them and calling them on telephones.

Fathers began greeting these calls with the same enthusiasm we reserve for telemarketers. "You'd like to speak with my son?" we say. "I am sorry, he is on a trip to Zimbabwe where he is marrying a local girl." The caller does not laugh. In fact, she calls back later. "Is this Edna?" we ask. "Or Diane or Sarah? There are so many, I get you mixed up."

Since my sons are both receiving calls from lovely girls who I am sure will make fine wives for someone in 20 or 30 years, I have decided to issue this short edict to help them increase their chances of that someone being one of my children. Though shorter than Martin Luther's 95 Theses, I believe this is worth nailing to the front door. I will be doing this myself later today. With an electric staple gun.

Rule One: If you would like to talk with my son, please do this in the church foyer during the fellowship hour when the lights are on. Remember to bring your family Bible.

Rule Two: My son is 16. The following locations and activities are acceptable for your date ... um ... I can't think of any right now.

Rule Three: Please remember that earrings are intended for your ears only.

Rule Four: If you would like to hang out with my son, you will have to put up with me. In fact, maybe I can show you my plastic action heroes collection. My grandfather started it, and I'm planning to give it to my daughter for a wedding present.

Rule Five: My son cannot use my minivan to drive you to a mall. The van is already booked that year.

Rule Six: Please do not touch my son. Do not lean against him unless you

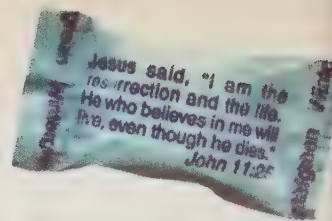
are falling over and are in danger of injuring yourself or plunging off a cliff. Do not even pull lint from his ear. I have been trying to do this for years and he will not let me. He can do this himself.

Rule Seven: I am aware that it is considered fashionable for girls your age to wear Britney Spears T-shirts that do not reach their low-slung pants or necklines that sink lower than the Dow Jones Industrial Average. My wife and I have discussed this and, since we want to be fair and open-minded about it, you are free to show up in such attire. My wife will affix it properly to your body with a glue gun.

Rule Eight: Above all else, please remember that we've been praying for this boy since before God gave him breath, and we will continue to. If you're The One, we've been praying for you too. And, in all seriousness, when he chooses a girl, we will be happier than Mr. and Mrs. Turtle when they finally exited Noah's Ark.

P.S. If you are a teenage girl who has read this and you still have a smile on your face, go ahead and call. Our number is 1-800-321. If you somehow get through, just remember that your call may be monitored by our Customer Service Department. **R**

Phil Callaway is a popular speaker and the author of numerous bestsellers including *Making Life Rich Without Any Money* (Harvest House). His website is www.philcallaway.com.



Spreading the message — kitsch style

All you need is a credit card, a modem and the will to share the Good News

by Andrew Faiz

How do you express your faith? Sunday morning service is good but, let's face it, that's only an hour a week. What can you do at the gym to show your love? How about a T-shirt (www.cafeshops.com/godsclay) that says God Said It ... I Believe It ... That Settles It ...? It has the necessary pith and it certainly is a conversation starter.

You're right, that's confrontational and a bit too right-wingy. Let's try a varsity sweater (www.spiritualwear.com) with J.C. State (of Mind) printed boldly across the chest. It's attractive, and people will stop you on the street and ask, "Hey, where's J.C. State?" And you can deliver the word: "In Heaven," or "In my heart," or "Everywhere."

We no longer need to go to the mountaintop to shout our love. We are God's personal billboards. And we can never start too young. I think my toddler daughter would look lovely in a lilac T-shirt bearing three doe-eyed girls dressed as a doctor, a rock star and a cheerleader. The affirmation comes from Philippians 4:13 (you can look it up). The boy's version has an astronaut, a firefighter and a football player.

They will know we are Christians by reading our chest. And once we have brought the sinner into our homes, how do we continue our ministry? A Warner Sallman calendar, of course (www.christianbook.com). Once a popular Jesus portraitist, Sallman is long due for a little retro-chic. (If you buy now, it's only \$4 US.)

As the sinner is sitting in our home, looking at the print of Jesus, we can serve them Testamints (www.sentbyangels.com). "Each package has an inspirational Bible verse printed on the side of the

wrapper and each mint has the shape of the cross embossed right into it." Or a Bible verse Chinese Cookie. And for the little ones, a Jesus Loves You lollipop. As the old saying goes, a spoonful of sugar helps the message go down.

It's not all about proselytizing; sometimes we need affirmation. Nuns are faith affirming (www.madonnashops.com) and they make great dress-up toys. There are 90 nun dolls in the collection, each with a different outfit representing the many orders around the world, some of which no longer exist. For parents who worry about the body image associated with Barbies and other mass-market dolls, well, worry no more. A nun doll will teach your child sacrifice, not consumerism, and the joys of faith, not the ills of vanity.

And for that space on your mantle, a Jesus figurine (www.collectiblestoday.com) floating above the Footprints in the Sand poem embossed in gold on a glass cloud. It's tastefulish and has a positive message.



You can go a little casual in the den with a Jesus sports statue (www.catholicshopper.com). "These statues portray Jesus actively participating with boys and girls in a variety of sports. A wonderful way to reinforce Jesus as 'friend' in everyday activities." My favourite is of Jesus taking a football pass from one boy while being tackled by another. I warn you though, while all the boys and girls on the figurines are dressed appropriately for the sport, Jesus never wears a helmet. You may have to explain that to your child.

You can soften the lesson with a stuffed toy. Not only is the Salvation Bear attractive (www.deerlake.com) but it is also a Bible lesson in colour code. It's not just for children; we all need a stuffed toy to bring us closer to our faith.

And that's the message of Christian Cuddlies (www.shopoli.com) — stuffed animals reading the Bible. At \$4.99 each, you can buy them by the dozen and give them to all the misbegotten and misplaced people you meet. Give them to strangers — everyone loves a stuffy.

These are the icons of our age. Yes, I've been having some fun at the cost of this kitsch, but I can't deny its power. The above list is only a pittance in an infinite sea of bad taste. But it's bad taste with a sincere intent. Think of it as a cute eye for the Malachi. All you need is a credit card, a modem and the will to share the Good News. And a sense of humour. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

Experiencing God in silence

Soaking in God's love and glory is life-transforming

by Susan Stott-Hood

It seemed like a long time: eight days, on retreat, in silence. My human tendency to doubt and question was matched with a stronger sense of intrigue and anticipation. I was filled with longing and an urgency to get there. I could not deny the feeling: I was going home.

What is it that moves us to seek God? Coming to accept spirituality as my personal journey toward God, I have consciously sought and nurtured ways to enhance that relationship. Even as a Christian, I have not always followed the call from God. It was much later in life that I understood we have a choice to follow God. And once we make this choice, we are committed to participate in the relationship. For me, growing spiritually as a Christian involves a commitment to be open to God, or the Holy Spirit, moving within me — changing me through my active relationship with God.

All of us have probably used spiritual disciplines or practices like prayer and meditation that help us develop the spiritual dimension of our lives. What I understand from the FLAMES Initiative Year of Spirituality is that we are being invited to explore new disciplines or ways of nurturing our relationship with God. Through centring prayer, or quieting myself, I have experienced God in a meaningful way.

Marjorie Thompson is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and author of *Soul Feast*. We are made to be in relationship with God, she writes. For her, spirituality is our relationship with God: God relating to us, and us responding to God. In his book *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser defines spirituality in terms of desire. We all have an innate desire for God at our deepest core — this is univer-



sal. But this desire is at a level not fully available to our consciousness; it lies at the centre of our lives in the deep recesses of the soul. Rolheiser believes spirituality is what we do with that desire. It is what we do with our longings and how we handle pain and hope. It is what we do with our unrest. Do I move toward God in response to this unrest? Or do I look for other worldly things to satisfy my thirst?

I recently embarked on an eight-day silent retreat at Loyola House in Guelph, Ont. These eight days of silence became a life-transforming experience. The 640-acre property is owned by the Jesuits. It is a working farm that teems with cre-

ation: cows, rabbits, goats, birds and bugs. In addition to the orchards and fields, there are also many nature trails through wetlands and fields. It also includes a natural labyrinth with different tall grasses outlining the paths. At the centre of the labyrinth is an old wooden bench, a welcome resting place in the midst of a prayerful walk.

The experience of all this through an act of silence was profound. The silence even extended through the meals, and I have to admit food never tasted so good! After a meal, I would sit in the lounge where tall nine-foot windows overlooked an unbelievable flower garden. It was paradise.

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Although the focus was on a silent encounter with God, I did talk a couple of times a day — if singing counts. Liturgy each day brought our community together in praise, an exchange of the peace of Christ and communion. And we each met with a spiritual director who listened to our experiences and suggested Scripture and types of prayer. I spent a lot of time with the Psalms, soaking in God's love and glory: "I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me" (Psalm 63).

I started the practice of meditating about four years prior to this silent retreat. During a difficult time in my life, I committed myself to sitting quietly for

When we let go of all effort to speak or to listen, the Spirit is free to work his healing mysteries in us

15 minutes a day and trying to turn my will over to God. To help me stop thinking about all the busyness around me, I repeated a short phrase. I stayed quiet for the 15 minutes — that was about all I could do. I often thought I probably wasn't doing it right; it seemed strange simply to sit there. But I realized, on occasion, that I was looking forward to this time. I felt a sense of peace when I was doing it.

I began to realize later that things were happening in my life that were absolutely awesome. I felt less need to control my life and started to trust more in God. I was miraculously accepted into a program at the University of Toronto that I had only dreamed about in the past. My life was getting better, and it has continued to get better. Loyola House in Guelph reminded me of the importance of this meditation, or centring prayer.

Marjorie Thompson describes centring or contemplative prayer as the ability to cease both speaking and listening and simply come before God or rest in God: "We move from communicating with God through speech to communing

For further reading

Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An invitation to the Christian spiritual life* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The search for a Christian spirituality* (Doubleday, 1999).

with God through the gaze of love. Words fall away, and the most palpable reality is being present to the lover of our souls. When we let go of all effort to speak or even to listen, simply becoming quiet before God, the Spirit is free to work his healing mysteries in us: releasing us from bondage, energizing new patterns of life, restoring our soul's beauty. Here we allow ourselves to be loved by God into wholeness."

Centring prayer acknowledges that extraneous thoughts are a part of us so, rather than trying to block them or deny them, we simply practise letting go of the thoughts by focusing on a sacred word. As I intentionally come before God and say "Here I am," I continually reinforce my commitment to be with God or to move toward God. I don't necessarily feel God working in me during these times of silent prayer; I simply trust that God is with me as I come, day after day, and present myself to God with no expectations. Yet, there grows within me a quiet knowing that this practice is feeding and nurturing me. There grows a gradual knowing that I am being immersed in God's love, a love that begins to define who I am and who I will be.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he prays that we will be strengthened in our inner being through a relationship with God. Spirituality is a lot like grace: it is all around us. God is continually in conversation with us. Our challenge is to nurture ways to tap into this conversation. God is saying some wonderful things to us. **R**

Susan Stott-Hood, an elder at St. Andrew's, Barrie, Ont., teaches at a Barrie community college and is in the process of completing an MA in ministry and spirituality at Regis College, University of Toronto.

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly:
www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

pastoral epistles from peter plymley II

Dear Editor:

By the time this epistle sees print, our readers on the lower West Coast will have long forgotten their bitter winter struggles with early morning fog and late afternoon showers, and those in Newfoundland will be eagerly watching the snow begin to melt. The Holy Grail of Canadian culture, the Stanley Cup, may actually be close to returning to Canadian hands or, at least, a Canadian team may be close enough to see it. And the hum of excitement that precedes another General Assembly will have reached a full-throated chorus ... if someone remembers the words.

Ah, May! The promissory note drawn on the Canadian hope for a few weeks of being able to go outside without prophylactics on the feet. Hope, at least the genuine kind and not some artificial sweetener, has been as scarce for Canadian Presbyterians as good news for Paul Martin, charisma for Stephen Harper and modesty for Jack Layton.

Speaking politically (which, as you know, I normally don't), has no one thought of the benefits of a nation-wide petition asking the Bloc Québécois to field candidates right across the country? They were once Her Majesty's Loyal (!) Opposition. And, at least as things are shaping up as I write, they are enjoying a resurgence of popularity in their home, and only, province. If they were the governing party of Canada, they could hardly separate from themselves. They have been pretty consistent and scandal-free. They are an unknown quantity and, I submit, an unknown quantity party might have broad appeal right now.

But back to our own harbour of misery and self-doubt, just to the right of the promontory of euphemism and pressurized cheer, wherever lies hope? Well, it should be noted that, though we continued our graceful death spiral to irrelevance or, maybe, even to oblivion with a little short of a 3,000 decline in the mem-

bership of professing Presbyterians, we nevertheless *increased* our givings to the national church by a few thousand dollars. *Much* less than the budgeted amount but, nevertheless, an increase. We are either loyal or stock-stupid.

In defence of the former option and in support of the latter, many of us have accepted the last edition of our hymn book, which reduces many hymns to the pitch of an automobile salesman: "What can I do, *Bob*, to put you into a new Whiz-Bang model, *Bob*, to make you drive away happy, *Bob*?" Anywhere there was

Hope for Presbyterians has been as scarce as good news for Paul Martin

a masculine pronoun for the Deity, we now substitute "God," which makes our hymn of praise sound as if we're trying to sell the Creator on a new convertible.

And where are all the people who were waiting for such "signs of life and relevance," not to speak of many other tortuous experiments in re-branding worship? How long will it take before we realize we are in accelerating decline primarily because *people no longer find the Christian message credible* — at least, in the way it is being presented? We've tampered with everything except the content. Feeling good about Jesus (whether in song, dance or dalliance with tantalizing trends in technology) or chasing down the fad-of-the-year (a market in which we confine ourselves to the pre-owned, new-to-you tables) have availed us nothing.

The classic Christian field of thought known as apologetics has come to mean saying we're sorry because we don't display choruses on an overhead projector

screen. Generations have come and gone — mostly gone — because teaching elders (the clergy) spend so much time either thinking up or responding to the demand for "exciting challenges." As if making the case for the gospel in today's world were easy and neither exciting nor a challenge.

Challenge, indeed! Maybe having to return to the basics is so difficult because there are so few basics available that have not been overgrown with the mould of cliché.

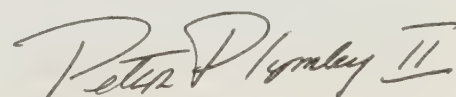
But is not our God and the message of salvation in Christ the same yesterday, today and forever? Yes, indeed, but the world and the people in it are decidedly not. We know decidedly more about our foundational texts than we did, say, in 1611.

We are offered no quarter, no head start, in contending for conviction. Instead of an almost universal dumbing down, a retreat into "a lifestyle option" mentality with technicians-cum-cheerleaders in clerical collars (or smart power suits), instead of trying to fight in armour designed for us by the winsome and with-it witnessing crowd, we should borrow from our own church history (remember church history?) and deal with the objections to our truth claims (voiced or timorously kept) that are more to the point than entertainment strategies and do-it-yourself-yet-again ways of keeping busy.

Phew! Now I'll go and lie down for a while.

Oh, I just remembered that Joyless John McWhirter has at least come up with a name for his "movement" — The Dancing Dinosaurs. He is pricing T-shirts, I think.

Yours apologetically,



A 150-year-old country church is the cornerstone of a community's spiritual revival

by Mark McElwain

It was Easter Sunday 2003, and 25 residents of Peel County in Ontario were singing (in hymn-writer John Wesley's words) lustily and with a good courage from *The Book of Praise* at a sunrise service in a small rural church. It was a scene being repeated in many churches, large and small, across the country. But at this service, there was a noticeable difference: there was no minister leading worship. The congregation had, in fact, been dissolved in 1965. Furthermore, until recent restoration work, the building had stood empty for more than three decades.

Both the service and the restoration came about from the efforts of the Friends of St. Andrew's Stone Church, an enterprising group made up of descendants of the original congregation as well as local residents from other denominations who admired the grace and

heritage of the abandoned building. Built in 1853 by the congregation of St. Andrew's, Caledon East, Ont., the church was constructed of local fieldstone employing a stonemason's technique of square-cutting stones called "ashlaring."

Until recent restoration work, the church had stood empty for more than three decades

To locals it became known simply as the Stone Church. It is unlikely many people fell asleep during the sermon in the Stone Church — the original seats were fashioned by cutting sections of tree trunks and placing boards across them. Considered a classic example of early Protestant church architecture, St.

Andrew's was designated a heritage structure in 1983 (its 130th anniversary) by the Town of Caledon on the recommendation of the local architectural advisory committee.

Little has changed in the church over the years. The pews are simple and devoid of decoration. Two side aisles lead to a platform on which stands the 1906 Estey pump organ, several pressback chairs and a lectern. Yet it will take money and hard work to restore and repair the building to its original simple beauty. The Friends are currently in the middle of extensive restorations that include structural repair, removing recent paint to uncover the original stencilling and a careful refurbishing of the pump organ.

Erica Pratt, a volunteer with the Friends, says the most difficult challenge faced by the group initially wasn't fundraising or the actual process of restora-



The Stone Church in Caledon, Ont., is once again echoing with the sounds of worship.

tion but “the painstaking work of dealing with bureaucrats.” After years of negotiations, the church was eventually bought by the Town of Caledon from the Presbyterian Church for \$2, on the understanding that the Friends would restore and run the building. “But now,” says Ms. Pratt, “we are in the enviable position of planning what activities, including services, can best involve the community.”

It’s the new role the Stone Church fulfills in the community that makes this story intriguing. During 2003, there were four services at the church: Easter, a cemetery service and two Christmas carol services, so popular they were split into afternoon and evening segments to accommodate 200 people. The Friends have also made donations to a local shelter. (All these activities are described at www.standchurch.org, an impressive website that could teach a few lessons to “active” congregations.)



The 1906 Estey pump organ provides a musical reminder of the past.

The Friends recently received the Stone Church’s original communion serving set, presented by the session of nearby Claude Church — the one Presbyterian congregation continuing from the original three-point charge. For the time being, the Friends are content to plan their own services and show no signs of seeking clergy guidance.

So, is this project primarily about pre-

serving an architecturally significant structure or constructing an authentic memorial to Caledon’s original settlers? Or, as this area repopulates into an affluent suburb, is there something of a spiritual community taking shape again on the foundations of the Stone Church? Only time will tell.

When asked if the Stone Church will still be there 50 years from now and whether people will still be worshipping in it, Ms. Pratt replies quickly and affirmatively: “Oh, definitely,” she says.

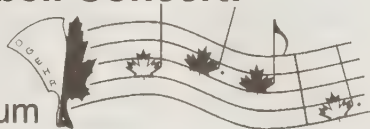
“There will always be a spiritual need for people to gather together.”

How many Presbyterian churches can look forward to the future with the same confidence and vision? **R**

Mark McElwain is a member at Rosedale Church, Toronto. His father, a retired Presbyterian minister, would qualify as a local who grew up near the Stone Church.

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Simeon and Anna

Simeon told Mary she would suffer,
and Anna chattered the news
to all passersby, their long faith
answered by more faith
and then death, for they were old.
They had waited, year on year,
year on year, and then
knew their myriad prayers,
that had long flurried up
like startled doves,
had found fulfillment
in a baby brought for blessing.

Here, small story, a tale that sees
investment and return in terms
other than ours, a story we must ponder
as we wait for we-know-not-what.
This is what we have held onto
forever, the promise that we will know
when all is known. The skimming
gyres of our silver wings
fill the sky. Vortex. Promise.

— Carol Hamilton

Giving oil for the lamps

The Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland

by Tom Dickey

The Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland covers a large swath of the Canadian Northwest, with little room for expansion — horizontally, at least. It extends from the immovable Rocky Mountains in the west to the very unlikely to be moved Saskatchewan border in the east. Actually, the presbytery does an excellent job of stretching to its eastern limits: Knox Church, Lloydminster, is only two blocks from the border. The southern boundary is marked by a mission point at the First Nation of Hobbema and the rural charge of Killam and Galahad. The northern boundary is the North Pole, but there are no immediate plans for extension work in that region.

The presbytery can trace its beginnings to the late 19th century and the days of wide open spaces in the West. The oldest congregation, appropriately known as First Church, in Edmonton,

was founded in 1881 — 23 years before the city of Edmonton, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The first two ministers of First — Rev. Andrew Baird, followed by Rev. David G. McQueen — also started numerous

**The first question
Mr. Baird asked Mr. McQueen
was not ‘Do you golf?’
but ‘Can you plough?’**

other congregations. As the fur trade gave way to early settlements, they were often preaching in many different places each month — from trading posts, to lumber camps, to isolated ranches. To be sure, neither man headed west wrapped in a cloud of naïveté. In his diary, Mr. Baird wrote of preaching at churches en

route “to give the people a sight of the man who is venturesome enough to go off to distant Edmonton.” A few years later, when Mr. McQueen accepted an “urgent invitation” to Edmonton from the superintendent of missions, Rev. James Robertson, he was told it was no place for weaklings and had little to offer in the way of preferment and comfort. No place for weaklings, indeed. The first question Mr. Baird asked Mr. McQueen was not “Do you golf?” but “Can you plough?”

Another groundbreaking minister in the presbytery was Rev. John E. Duclos, who established French mission work in Bonnyville in 1916. “I received a letter from a French-Canadian in Bonnyville,” Mr. Duclos recalled in a history of Presbyterian pioneer missionaries, “stating that there were 30 families leaving the Roman Catholic Church, and he asked if a minister of the gospel could come and ‘teach them how to perform their reli-



A contrast in size but not in faith — First Church, Edmonton (third building, 1912), and Ganton Church.



Vacation Bible School at Mill Woods Church, Edmonton, 2001.

gious duties.” He went on to write: “I found that whilst the letter purported the truth, there were only four families who were both ready to sever their connection with the Roman Catholic Church and to join any evangelical society.” The others had, in Mr. Duclos’s wonderful phrase, “drifted into a state of infidelity and indifference.” Nevertheless, “these four formed the nucleus of a great work,” he declared.

There are still reminders in the presbytery today of a time when everything was bigger in the West. Within its bounds is the world’s largest shopping mall, the West Edmonton Mall — a complex with more than 800 stores, 23,500 employees and the world’s largest indoor triple-loop roller coaster, among *many* other things. For those who long for a simpler lifestyle, there is the world’s largest sundial in Lloydminster. The presbytery is also home to 22 congregations in 18 pastoral charges, ranging from the tiny Ganton Church, with an average attendance of about 20 (half the sanctuary’s capacity), to the congregations of First and Dayspring in Edmonton, with an average attendance 10 times that of Ganton. Rural churches are facing a struggle, and some are meeting the problem in unusual ways. The Killam and Galahad charge has a bi-vocational minister known as The Iceman, not because of a cool demeanour but because he drives the Zamboni machine at the local arena. At the same time, several new churches have sprung up, such as Callingwood Road,

Parkland First, Mill Woods, Eastminster and Sherwood Park.

The human spectrum is well represented in the presbytery. The congregation of Mill Woods, for example, has people from every continent. Dayspring Church is active in sponsoring refugees to Canada. Calvin Hungarian has a long history of work with people from the Reformed tradition in Eastern Europe. There are constant challenges to find ways to bring the gospel to new generations. The latest effort is the Edmonton Urban Native Ministries, with Rev. Hoo Sik Kim, who works from St. Andrew’s Church in Edmonton.

Education remains a priority for the presbytery. Last summer, it sponsored 10 vacation Bible schools attended by more than 250 children. For the youth, a winter retreat has been a feature for the past 14 years. And for the young adults, the presbytery is a sponsor of the chaplaincy at the University of Alberta. (It is possible the presbytery will receive an education of its own when it plays host to the General Assembly in 2005.)

The presence of the oil industry in the region has provided the Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland with a high degree of mobility. People come and work when things are booming; some go when things quiet down. And just as in the days of trading posts, lumber camps and the first settlers, the Presbytery of Edmonton-Lakeland and the Presbyterian Church are there to provide a welcome and a feeling of stability. **[E]**

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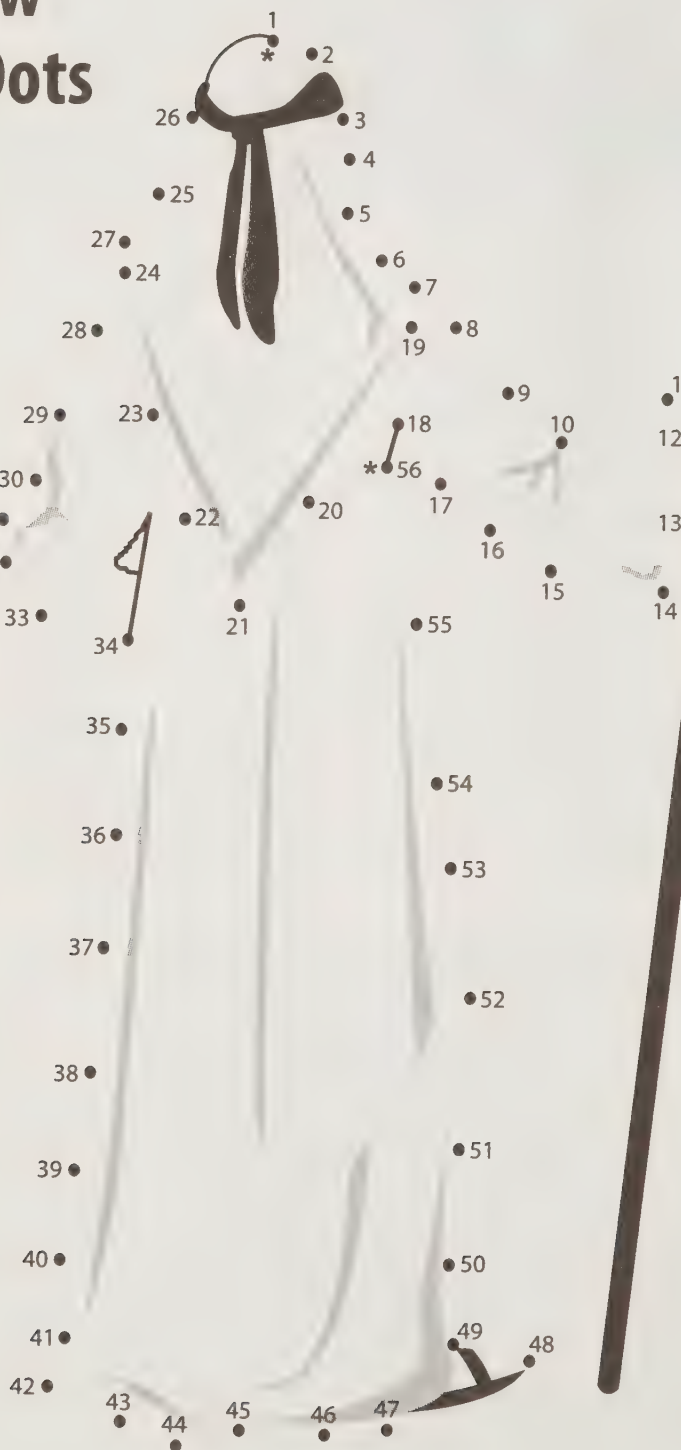
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Created by Jennifer O'Farrell,
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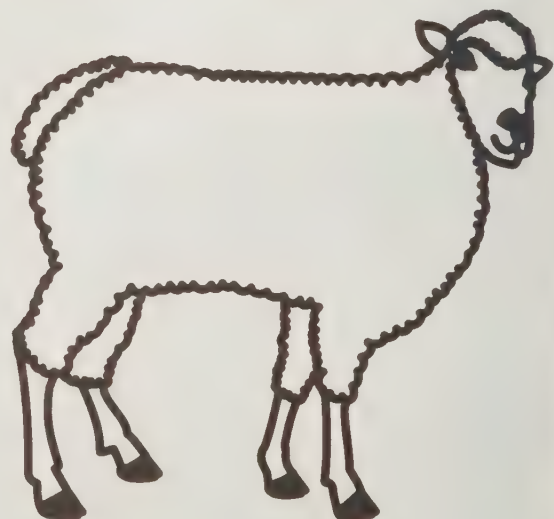
Follow the Dots



**My shepherd is the King of love
whose goodness fails me never;
for all things good from God above
restore my soul forever.**

**And so through all the length of days
your goodness fails me never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise
within your house forever!**

Words: Psalm 23, paraphrase by Henry Williams
Baker (1821-1877), altered, verses 1 and 6 of
Hymn #691 in *The Book of Praise*



You will find more learning activities online at:
www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html

Read Psalm 23

obituaries

Black, Nesta Violet (Blackie), Feb. 26, 2004. Long-serving, faithful, dedicated member, Knox Church, Sudbury, Ont. Past-president of the W.A., 25 years secretary-treasurer of Memorial Fund and very enthusiastic in all church activities. She will be missed.

Crawford, The Rev. Harry, 71, died suddenly on Feb. 28, 2004. Born in Ontario, Harry received his MA and BD from Glasgow University. Returning to Canada, he was ordained through the Presbytery of London. He served the congregations of St. Giles, North Sydney, St. Laurent, Quebec, and Dayspring, Edmonton. In 1973 until 1977, he served as communications consultant for the national church. Following this, he entered the private sector and was a leader in human resources and outplacement counselling until retirement in 1996. A service celebrating his life was conducted in Toronto on March 8 by the Rev. Gloria Langlois. Harry leaves his wife, Anne, daughter Catherine, new granddaughter Tabitha, and brother Norman.

Ferguson, Mary Viola Joyce "Jo" (Sanderson), died peacefully on March 1, 2004, in Chesley, Ont., at age 93. Born with her twin sister in a sod shack on a homestead during a January blizzard in Elstow, Sask., on Jan. 4, 1911, she was also a daughter of the manse. Jo married the late Rev. Percy (P.A.) Ferguson in 1940, whom she met while P.A. was serving a summer student mission field in Indian Head, Sask. She is the mother of the Rev. Rod Ferguson (Jo) of Prince George, B.C., Judith of St. Albert, Alta., Trevor (Lynne) of Montreal, and Jamie (Enola MacKinnon) of Palgrave, Ont.; and the grandmother of Freya Brehaut (Craig Solie) of Richmond, Sask., and Jamie (Marla Gorko) of Calgary. Jo was an extraordinary teacher, starting in one-room schools on the Prairies during the 1930s. Many of her students remained lifelong friends and went on to careers of distinction in business, medicine, education and literature. She became a pioneering teacher of English as a Second Language with the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal at Sinclair Laird School and, later, the Faculty of Education, McGill University. The Ferguson household was the gathering place for many immigrant families honing their language skills and learning a little Canadian culture, especially at supper on Sunday evenings — Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? her children called it. Music was a passion. Jo sang in many choirs, including the Elgar Choir in Montreal, led school choirs, and established a number of junior church choirs. She and P.A. had a great interest in church camping, and Jo often directed church camps at Camp Kintail and Peace Memorial at Lancaster, Ont. She served the WMS in many capacities and

was often a guest speaker at meetings across the country. In retirement, Jo and P.A. moved to Chesley, Ont. There they enjoyed travel, lawn bowling and gardening. An inveterate Scrabble player, she played upside down, winning more than losing, even in her last weeks. For those who wish, memorial gifts may be made to Presbyterians Sharing, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

Goldsmith, Norma Jean, born July 14, 1930, in Guelph, Ont. (a member of Knox Church), died on Jan. 4, 2004, following a valiant and heroic battle with cancer. As a young woman, she attended the Missionary and Deaconess Training School (later known as Ewart College), graduating in 1955. She was appointed as regional secretary for the Synod/Synodical of Alberta (WMS). In 1961 she married Rev. James Goldsmith and shared in his ministries in St. John's (Nfld.), Dartmouth (N.S.), Burlington (Ont.), Montreal (Que.) and Welland (Ont.).

While in Montreal, Norma served as Christian education coordinator for the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. Her work included a major emphasis on church camping with CGIT and at camps Kannawin, Geddie and Gracefield. For several years, she directed the camping practicum for Ewart College students. Norma was involved with leadership training and curriculum development for several years, all this being squeezed into time available from being a full-time wife and mother. In 2002, Norma was honoured by APCE as recipient of the Life Achievement Award.

Norma will be missed for her energy, spirit, sense of dedication and the relentless drive she had to help advance the work of God's Kingdom and Church. While others found their wheels clogged and stopped, Norma always kept her wheels turning as she found a way to press on. A memorial service was held on Jan. 8 at Kirk-on-the-Hill, Fonthill, Ont., where the church was overflowing both in numbers and in appreciation and celebration of the life, love and witness of this humble servant. The Goldsmiths have two children: David (Sherry) of Ottawa and Margaret (Peter Stumph) of Cambridge. There are five grandchildren.

Graham, Rev. William John, slipped the surly bonds of Earth on March 7, 2004. Following service in the Royal Canadian Air Force in WWII, Bill was called to the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. He was ordained May 26, 1953, at Westmount Presbyterian Church in Edmonton, where he also served as Protestant chaplain of 418 City of Edmonton Auxiliary Squadron. Bill transferred to the Regular Force in 1960, serving at Downsview, Goose Bay, Trenton, Bagotville, Cold Lake, Baden Germany, and Moose Jaw.

After retiring from the Canadian Forces in 1979, he was called to Braeside Church in St. Albert. In 1981 he was appointed city chaplain in Edmonton and later served as chaplain with the Edmonton Fire Department. More recently he served as an associate minister with Rio Terrace Community Church, First Presbyterian Church, Edmonton, and Sherwood Park Presbyterian Church. Survived by his children of his marriage to Cathie: daughter Lexie (Gord) Stranks, son Cameron (Anne), and son Scott (Doug); sister Elaine (Gordon) Patterson; seven grandchildren and a great-grandson.

Harrison, Bill, 81, long-time member and elder of Caledonia Presbyterian Church, Caledonia, Ont., Feb. 6, 2004.

Malloy, N. Coulson, long-time member of Glenview, Toronto. As an elder of this congregation for 48 years, he faithfully cared for those in his district as well as many others in the congregation until his death at the age of 93 on Feb. 7, 2004. He also served as envelope secretary for many years. At the opening of the 127th General Assembly, hosted by Glenview, he delivered the responsive prayer at the opening service along with a nine-year-old girl from Glenview. Many found this to be one of the most moving moments of the service. In May 2003, he represented the retiring members of session on the day that the new governance structure of Glenview went into effect and expressed good wishes to the new session and ministry teams. He and his wife, Molly, who predeceased him by 11 months, have left his family and the Glenview congregation with a lasting legacy of lives lived with grace, dignity and service to others.

Martindale, George Featherstone, 76, long-time member and elder of Caledonia Presbyterian Church, Caledonia, Ont., Dec. 1, 2003.

Powel, William John (Jack), 94, Jan. 9, 2004. Devoted long-time member, served many years on finance committee, Knox Church, Sudbury, Ont. He will be greatly missed by his church family.

Ramsay, Roland, 84, passed away Jan. 14, 2004. Valued member and elder, Lot 14 Presbyterian Church, P.E.I.

Sylvestry-Innes, Suzanne, 55, Jan. 22, 2004. Member of Knox Church, Sudbury, Ont. Her happy countenance will be missed.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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Hunter River, PEI; Glasgow Road; Brookfield. Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson, PO Box 275, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7K4; stapmath@eastlink.com.

Little Narrows, NS; Whycomomagh, St. Andrew's. Rev. Dr. Floyd R. McPhee, 40 Big Marsh Rd., RR 1, River Denys, NS B0E 2Y0; 902-756-3154; cfmcphee@ns.sympatico.ca.

Lunenburg, NS, St. Andrew's; Rose Bay, St. Andrew's. Rev. L. George Macdonald, 6357 London St., Halifax, NS B3L 1X2; 902-454-5253; lgmacdonald@ns.sympatico.ca.

Murray Harbour North pastoral charge, PEI (Murray Harbour North; Murray Harbour South; Peter's Road; Caledonia). Rev. Roger MacPhee, Belfast PO, Belfast, PEI C0A 1A0; 902-659-2703; rkmacphee@pei.sympatico.ca.

Truro, NS, St. James; McClure's Mills, St. Paul's. Rev. Laurence Mawhinney, PO Box 1972, Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0; dlmawhinney@eastlink.ca.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

Kars, ON, St. Andrew's (part-time). Rev. Sam Livingstone, Box 219, Kars, ON K0A 2E0; samshar2@aol.com.

Montreal, Chinese. Rev. J.S.S. Armour, 101 Creswell Dr., Beaconsfield, QC H9W 1E1; 514-426-4688; jss@magma.ca.

Maxville, ON; Moose Creek; St. Elmo (three-point charge). Rev. Dr. Fred Rennie, 109 Jarvis St., Cornwall, ON K6H 5J1; johneen.fred@sympatico.ca.

Orleans (City of Ottawa), ON, Grace. Rev. Jack Archibald, 971 Woodroffe Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 3G9; 613-729-3384; office@st.paulspc.com.

Ottawa, Church of St. David and St. Martin. Rev. Cedric Pettigrew, 343 Bronson Ave., Ottawa, ON K1R 6J2; cedric.pettigrew@sympatico.ca.

Ottawa, Knox. Rev. William Ball, 470 Roosevelt Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 1Z6; 613-722-1144; wball@magma.ca.

Ottawa, St. Andrew's (minister of Christian development). Rev. Charlene Wilson, 579 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 4K1; jcwilson@magma.ca.

Pincourt, QC, Ile Perrot. David Morris, Convener, Search Committee, 242 Fifth Ave., Pincourt, QC J7V 5L3; 514-453-4378; dafydd.rich@sympatico.ca.

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Rev. Jim Kitson, 539 Hugel Ave., Midland, ON L4R 1W1; 705-526-7421; jkitson@knoxmidland.ca.

Bobcaygeon, Knox; Rosedale. Rev. Rod Lewis, Box 867, Fenelon Falls, ON K0M 1N0; 705-887-3901; rolewis@quicklinks.on.ca.

Campbellford, St. Andrew's; Burnbrae, St. Andrew's. Rev. Dr. Don Freeman, 272 Lilly Lake Rd., RR 2, Peterborough, ON K9J 6X3; 705-749-3290; donafreeman@hotmail.com.

Collingwood, First. Rev. Dr. A.R. Neal Mathers, Box 12, Nottawa, ON L0M 1P0; 705-444-6823; arnmat@bconnex.net.

Hillsburgh, St. Andrew's. Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; tweedsmuirpresbyterian@bellnet.ca.

Ivy, Ivy Church; Barrie, Essa Road; (three-quarters time). Rev. Patrick Voo, 8 Margaret St., Angus, ON L0M 1B0; 705-424-6118; zionangus@aol.com; www.ivypreschurch.com.

Lakefield, St. Andrew's; Lakehurst, Knox. Rev. William Baird, 68 Lang Rd., RR 3, Keene, ON K0L 2G0; Tel/Fax 705-295-6874.

Lindsay, St. Andrew's (senior team minister). Rev. Dawn Griffiths, 45 Bond St., Lindsay, ON K9V 3P9; 705-324-5992; db.griffiths@sympatico.ca.

Markham, Chinese (church worker, Cantonese-speaking, one-year contract). Rev. Samuel Priestly, 143 Main St. N, Markham, ON L3P 1Y2.

Mississauga, Clarkson Road. Rev. Sean J. Foster, 156 Third Line, Oakville, ON L6L 3Z8; 905-827-3851; sean@hopedalechurch.ca.

Palmerston, Knox; Drayton, Knox. Rev. Dr. Brice L. Martin, 190 Tucker St., Box 159, Arthur, ON N0G 1A0; bricelmartin@yahoo.com.

Scarborough, Knox (Agincourt). Rev. Dr. Ian Clark, 5 Ruddell Pl., Toronto, ON M1C 3E4; ian.clark@utoronto.ca.

Scarborough, St. David's. Rev. Everett Briard, 255 Wright Cres., Ajax, ON L1S 5S5; ebriard@rogers.com.

Scarborough, St. Stephen's. Rev. Wayne Kleinsteuber, 1301 Neilson Rd., Scarborough, ON M1B 3C2.

Schomberg, Emmanuel (half-time). Rev. Barry Van Dusen, 5750 King Rd., PO Box 535, Nobleton, ON L0G 1N0; 905-859-0843; barry.peggy.vandusen@sympatico.ca.

Stouffville, St. James. Rev. Laura Duggan, 484 Water St., Newmarket, ON L3Y 1M5; 905-895-5512; duggan@on.aibn.com.

Toronto, Gateway Community. Rev. Dr. Stewart Gillan, 150 Gateway Blvd., Toronto, ON M3C 3E6; 416-696-7909; sgillan@sympatico.ca.

Toronto, Formosan (Taiwanese-speaking with some fluency in English). Rev. Jim Biggs, 1080 Finch Ave. E, Toronto, ON M2J 2X2; postmaster@tri-church.org; www.tfpc.cjb.net.

Toronto, Rexdale (two-thirds time). Rev. George Anderson, 3819 Bloor St. W, Toronto, ON M9B 1K7; george@standrewsislington.org.

Toronto, Riverdale. Rev. Cameron Brett, 75 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; cbrett@standrewstoronto.org.

Toronto, Runnymede. Rev. Marion Schaffer, 680 Annette St., Toronto, ON M6S 2C3; marion_schaffer@yahoo.com.

Toronto, St. Andrew's, Humber Heights. Rev. Garth Wilson, 155 Wychwood Ave., Toronto, ON M6C 2T1.

Toronto, University Church. Rev. Bryn MacPhail, 15 Lambeth Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9A 2Y6; bryn@reformedtheology.ca.

Toronto, Westview. Rev. Hugh T. Donnelly, 65 Glen Manor Dr., Toronto, ON M4E 3V3; hugh@beacheschurch.org and/or Rev. Dr. Jan McIntyre, 152 Floyd Ave., Toronto, ON M4K 2B7; janiceronald@rogers.com.

Wasaga Beach, Wasaga Beach Community. Rev. Craig Cook, 9 Lindsay Cres., Orillia, ON L3V 7G2; lightsem@sprint.ca.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Ashfield, Ashfield Church; Ripley, Knox. Rev. Harvey Osborne, Box 399, Teeswater, ON N0G 2S0; 519-392-6955; hosborne@wrightman.ca.

Bluevale, Knox; Belmore, Knox. Rev. Dr. Ken Oakes, PO Box 83, Chesley, ON N0G 1L0; 519-363-5050; kioakes@hotmail.com.

Brantford, Knox; Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Pleasant Church. Rev. Donald N. Young, 11 White Oaks Ave., Brantford, ON N3R 5N8; greenbrier@bfree.on.ca.

Chatham, St. James. Rev. David Heath, 251 Duncan St., Wallaceburg, ON N8A 5G5; dsheath@cogeco.ca.

Corunna, St. Andrew's. Rev. Dean Adlam, PO Box 636, Petrolia, ON N0N 1R0; 519-882-2400; deanandnadine@xcelco.on.ca.

Kincardine, Knox. Rev. Peggy Kinsman, Box 219, Lucknow, ON N0G 2H0; peggyk@scsinternet.com; 519-528-3730.

Largie, Duff; Crinan, Argyle. Rev. Amanda Birchall, RR 3, Appin, ON N0L 1A0; 519-289-0977; Amanda_Birchall@hotmail.com.

Milverton, Burns; North Mornington. Rev. Mark Davidson, 220 Livingstone Ave. N, Listowel, ON N4W 1P9; jmdavidson@porchlight.ca.

Port Colborne, First. Rev. Cameron Bigelow, 6 Burns Pl., Fort Erie, ON L2A 3W1; cbigelow@vaxxine.com.

Shakespeare, Shakespeare Church; North Easthope, Knox. Rev. Peter Bush, Box 235, 92 St. Andrew St., Mitchell, ON N0K 1N0; 519-348-9080; knoxmit@quadro.net.

Stratford, St. Andrew's. Rev. John Zondag, 220 Livingstone Ave. N, Listowel, ON N4W 1P9; 519-291-4690; jzondag@porchlight.ca.

Thamesville, St. James; Duart. Rev. Kate Pfeffer-McIntosh, 250 Redwood Cres., RR 3, Belle River, ON N0R 1A0; 519-727-9997.

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Saskatoon, Calvin Goforth; Saskatoon, McKercher Drive. Rev. Amanda Currie, 436 Spadina Cres. E, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3G6; revacurrie@shaw.ca; 306-242-0525.

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Bassano, AB, Knox; Gem, Gem Church. Rev. Dr. R. Cruickshank, 504-2nd Street SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0C6; 403-526-4542; st_johns@telusplanet.net or Rev. D.V. Beach, 212 Perry Cres. NE, Medicine Hat, AB T1C 1X3; 403-526-3512; beachdv@memlane.com.

Edmonton, Mill Woods. Rev. Richard Frotten, 13820-109A Ave., Edmonton, AB T5M 2K1; frotten@shaw.ca.

Lloydminster, AB, Knox. Rev. Glenn Ball, 265 Fir St., Sherwood Park, AB T8A 2G7; sherwoodparkpresby@shaw.ca.

Synod of British Columbia

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Evangelizing kinglet style is simple

It is the sweet, big announcing of the reasons for hope within us

by David Webber

“Get the binoculars and come quick!”

“What is it now, David? Why must you break every silence by a sentence with ‘binoculars’ in it? Can’t you just wear the ruddy things around your neck?”

“I can’t wear neckties — it’s against my religion,” I snorted. “Pleeeeeease, bring the binoculars — quick! The ones you got last Mother’s Day will do. Just be quick about it!”

Linda wandered out onto the deck of our waterfront cottage and thrust the binoculars into my chest. “Yeah, right, ties are against the Presbyterian religion. You definitely like to think you are in a class by yourself.”

“You hear that?” I whispered.

“Wow! Yes I do. A bird with a voice like that has got to be a fair size. Where is the big fella? Hey, he’s a good singer too!”

“Look, right up there in that spruce about 15 feet away, right over your head. He is only the size of a hummingbird on steroids, and his grey-green colour blends right into the tree, but he is as cute as the dickens and, man, can he sing. Especially for you, dear, on your day — your Mother’s Day present from me! Here, have a good look at him through your last year’s Mother’s Day binoculars.”

I handed Linda her binoculars as she chuckled something to the effect that extravagance was my single most Presbyterian trait. We then spent a wonderful Mother’s Day morning watching “Linda’s” little bird, following it from the spruce tree shading our deck on down to the grove of spruces at the water’s edge where a couple of Adirondack chairs were stationed for birds and sunsets.



Photo by Richard Ditch

The little bird was most unusual. There really was not much more to him than a hummingbird, but he definitely was not one of those bad-tempered bombers. This little fella was honestly good-hearted and he seemed to genuinely enjoy our presence as he flitted quietly but respectfully around our heads. He never seemed to stop moving for long. And, then, he would land for a moment on a twig, lift his tiny red comb (the only bit of colour in his otherwise nondescript plumage) and flash it at us before he launched into a brilliant, clear, sweet and loud song: “*See see see, you you you, lookatme, lookatme, lookatme.*”

And he sang the same sweet song over and over as he flitted about endlessly. He seemed like such a hopeful wee fella and, yet, so gentle and unassuming.

Linda’s Mother’s Day bird — and that’s what we always call it now — is really the ruby-crowned kinglet (*Regulus calendula*). I had heard it many times before but I was always looking for a big bird, one at least the size of a robin. The little kinglet is so small I never associated its big sweet song with a tiny bird. But this time, he flashed his little ruby-red comb and the sun glinting off it torched it up like a tiny stoplight. I was staring right at him when he burst into

song. What a treat. What a gift. What a Mother's Day present — and it didn't cost me a cent (heh, heh, heh!).

I spent the remainder of the day thinking about Linda's bird. It was not only attractive, but its attraction was long-lasting. It was hard to put my finger on what made the bird so attractive. It certainly wasn't his size or plumage. True, he was seemingly a good-hearted little fella, a gentle and friendly bird. He certainly seemed like a hopeful guy, sweet and respectful too. But in the end, it was his big, clear, sweet song that carried all the attraction for me.

Eventually, the little bird got all tangled up in my mind with Scripture, faith and church. It's kind of an occupational hazard for me. I had been puzzling over this thing the church calls evangelism. Every denomination uses the word. A few years ago, our denomination introduced something called the FLAMES Initiative. It declared there to be six flames, each one a worthy church focus for a year after a promotional year — seven years in all (sort of like the seven-year itch). June 2002-June 2003 was declared the Year of Evangelism, an "ism" word I am learning to dislike along with all other ism words. (I dislike ism words because they take perfectly good active verbs and turn them into non-words for the sake of a noun to name an activity — creating a nonentity better known as a movement.) For the Year of Evangelism, the national church declared all kinds of activities in which congregations should consider getting involved. What I was struggling with was that few of these activities ever seemed to involve stomping up to someone and telling them directly the good news about a Saviour.

Now a theological wizard I am not, and no one has ever accused me of being a great biblical exegete. But according to my Bible dictionary, the verb "evangelize" comes from the Greek meaning "to announce news," and it is usually rendered as "preach the gospel" in the New Testament. The whole point of the useful verb evangelize is to attract people to Jesus Christ by announcing the good news about his love and salvation. To evangelize in the Christian context is to attract people to Christ by telling good news — announcing it and singing it out.

It is not to be confused with Christian service, social action, welcoming people at the church door, smiling at people on the street, helping a neighbour shovel the driveway and developing programs for church nurture and growth — all of which is good enough stuff. And you

'How can they hear about him unless someone tells them?'

know, I can't think of a single Christian denomination that doesn't get it all confused.

In contrast to this confused "evangelism," I have the witness of the Scriptures. One witness says: "... in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ..." (1 Peter 3:15-16).¹ And in another place, Scripture says: "'Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe

in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?" (Romans 10:13-14).²

The witness of Linda's Mother's Day bird — a tiny, nondescript, good-hearted, gentle, friendly, respectful bird — has only one thing to attract attention: a big, announcing, never-ending sweet song. Could it be that simple? Could evangelizing people be that simple? Could attracting people be that simple? The Bible says it is. Linda's bird demonstrates it is. The sweet, big announcing of the reasons for the hope within us — now there is a song. It might not qualify as "evangelism" in the church, but I expect it has been attracting people to Christ since the first Easter. It is evangelizing kinglet style. (Oh, no! I hope I haven't created the foundation for a new ism.) **R**

1 *The New International Version*

2 *New Living Translation*

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter's Aspen: Embracing the Creator's Fire*.

A Grief That Was My Own

I sat beside a woman on the train
who wore a velvet hat upon her brain
which held her thoughts just like the velvet folds
that held her father tightly in the cold
inside his box which six strong men let down
into a stronger hole dug in the ground.
She tried to scream — the velvet held it in,
for part of her was buried there with him.

Of course I did not know this at the time.

She did not say, I did not ask, that's life.


You can't expect me to read others' minds.

You can't expect me to share in their strife.

Besides, I bore a grief that was my own —

My neck was scratched from how my tag was sewn.

— Grant A. Pasay



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June 2004

A photograph of a group of children in a war-torn area. In the foreground, a young boy in a blue sweater and red pants sits on a bicycle, making a peace sign with his right hand. To his left, another boy in a green jacket holds a wooden stick. Behind them, several other children are visible, some looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a white car and a stone wall, suggesting a conflict-ridden environment. The overall tone is somber yet hopeful, reflecting the article's title.

**Is this a sign of peace
for the Middle East?**

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our cover

Palestinian children play in the remains of a building bombed by Israeli F-16s in the historic part of Nablus. Hamas has a strong presence in the West Bank city.

David Harris photo

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Outrageous Liberal poll insults us all

A few weeks ago, the federal Liberals commissioned a poll asking voters in Ontario, “[Would you be] more or less likely to vote for the Conservative/Alliance if you knew they had been taken over by evangelical Christians?” There’s a clear equation here between evangelical and conservative that needs to be addressed, but even small-l liberal Christians ought to be appalled by this question.

So no one misses the point, let’s rephrase the question. What if the poll had asked voters, “[Would you be] more or less likely to vote for the Conservative/Alliance if you knew they had been taken over by Jews?” The result would have been a sharp intake of breath across the country. Lawsuits would be filed or, worse, complaints lodged with the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The example is not a gratuitous use of Judaism. Recently, *Adbusters* magazine decided to identify Jews among certain leading U.S. neo-conservatives. The outrage and cancellations of subscriptions there were swifter than the response to the Liberals’ question in Canada, where there have been no stories about mass cancellations of Liberal Party memberships.

Adbusters defended its story by saying it was important for people to know that half of the U.S. neo-conservatives they identified as influencing the Bush administration are Jewish. It’s an undisguised anti-Jewish conspiracy theory and, even if the observation weren’t true, the magazine’s approach would still be utterly wrong. But one cannot help noting the extraordinary irony that many of the most vocal critics of the Bush administration are also Jewish — which fact serves only to belie the noxious notion that a shared ethnicity equals shared values.

What’s wrong in both cases is pigeonholing people on the basis of some perceived broad faith or ethnic similarities. The Nazis did this more than 75 years ago, and it’s what Rwandan Hutus did a decade ago. It’s at the heart of all discrimination based not on what individuals think but on a common or perceived-to-be common trait, whether race, ethnicity or faith.

To be sure, with respect to the Liberals’ question, there are some evangelical Christians who are trying to equate evangelicalism with conservatism. But evangelicals in Canada are not a homogenous group. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, an association of conservative Christians founded in 1964, provides an umbrella for many of the country’s smaller

denominations and conservative Christian groups. None of the country’s mainline churches are members. The United and Evangelical Lutheran churches have no association with the EFC at all; the Presbyterian and Anglican churches have observer status only.

On almost every hot-button social issue, especially those concerned with sexuality, the EFC has taken a vocal, conservative stance, intervening or applying to intervene in major court cases — often finding itself allied with Canada’s Roman Catholic bishops. Perhaps that was a factor in a poll the EFC had conducted by Ipsos-Reid last fall. The poll defined the term

Christians — indeed all people of faith — of all political and theological stripes ought to make their feelings known to the Liberals until they apologize for their actions

evangelical in socially conservative terms and coined a term that is otherwise an oxymoron, “Catholic evangelical,” to encompass conservative Roman Catholics. On that basis, the poll concluded that 19 per cent of Canadians are evangelical: 12 per cent Roman Catholic and seven per cent not. If anything, what the poll showed is that 19 per cent of Canadians are conservative Christians, most of whom are Roman Catholic. But evangelical? Hardly.

In many parts of the world, such as Africa and the Middle East, evangelical in the title of a church probably means it is Presbyterian. In Canada, veteran NDP MP Bill Blaikie might equally assert that he is evangelical. After all, he is a minister of the United Church, and its roots are predominantly Methodist and Presbyterian — evangelical churches if ever there were and as outspoken on social justice issues as the EFC. Like their Methodist forebears, the United Church continues to speak out today, although it often does so from a liberal theological position. That does not make it any less evangelical.

Presbyterians have not been absent from this stage either. Historian John Moir notes in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* that Presbyterian minister Rev. John Shearer (1859-1925) became known as “the mouthpiece of the social conscience of Canadian Christianity” for his “speeches and articles against

unsafe housing and working conditions, abuse of women and children, alcoholism, venereal disease, prostitution and political corruption.”

But as in the *Adbusters* case, it is not that the category used is a meaningless measuring stick, it's that such a stick has been used at all.

Since this issue of the *Record* contains a report on the Middle East, including Israel and Palestine, it is interesting to note that it was this very sort of pigeonholing in the 19th century that indirectly led to the creation of the modern state of Israel. European nationalism promoted certain commonalities that helped create the modern state of Germany in 1871 while laying the foundations of Fascism. It also led to Jewish nationalism. In 1897, the First Zionist Conference in Basle, Switzerland, adopted the statement that “The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.” Nationalism in Germany led ultimately to the genocidal persecution of Jews and other non-Aryans. That, combined with Jewish nationalism, convinced the world to create a state for Jews in predominantly Arab Palestine. (Which is most certainly not to suggest a moral equivalence between Nazi Germany and Israel. The former was an evil regime; Israel is not.)

It is a long way from the sad state of affairs in the Middle East to polling about political parties that might be controlled by so-called evangelical Christians. But Christians — indeed all people of faith — of all political and theological stripes ought to make their feelings known to the Liberals until they apologize for their actions. There are Christians in every political party in Canada, and it is what unites them that gives them their moniker — baptism in Christ, in whom there is “neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female.”

David Harris

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David Webber is a breath of fresh air

With each issue of the *Presbyterian Record*, I thank God for David Webber. In this world with its abundance of hate, poverty, starvation, war and controversy, his ability to see joy and beauty and fun in the world around him is a blessing and helps us keep our perspective. Not that the other topics are unimportant or invalid but, at the end of reading through our magazine, his article is a breath of clean fresh air.

Colleen Richardson,
Perth, Ont.

What matters?

I have followed with some interest Andrew Faiz's critical commentaries on faith interacting with the prevailing culture. I have appreciated his personal integrity and effort as he engages the world around us. Yet it concerns me that our resident critical eye is ready to frown upon TV shows and movies as "theologically lazy" (December 2003) while admitting "I don't claim to know the Bible well — I haven't read it cover to cover" (October 2003).

Whether we are elders, pastors or the undesignated faithful, we need concerted spiritual engagement with the length, breadth and depth of the word of God if we are to respond to the world's offerings with full Christian integrity. What matters is a faith that looks to the historical Christ rather than "the Christ of my faith." It *does* matter whether or not Jesus was "only a man" or "if there [were] no Easter" (February 2004). Does it matter that Jesus "died horribly" and not by "slipping on a banana peel or quietly in his sleep" (April 2004)? Yes, the entirety of God's word declares this so.

Patrick Voo,
Angus, Ont.

The Passion was a challenge not a cartoon

I tried to resist responding to your April editorial and Andrew Faiz's commentary

in Pop Christianity, but I cannot remain silent.

I attended a preview showing of *The Passion of The Christ* with my associate in ministry. Although we disagreed on the impact the film might have within various segments of our culture, we fully agreed many Christians would be profoundly moved by the experience of viewing it. We encouraged the congregation to attend showings the first week, followed by an opportunity to debrief at our church.

No one identified any segment of anti-Semitic feeling stirred by the film.

Those who lacked knowledge of the story of Christ did experience difficulty in understanding how everything fit. One representative comment was: "I have only been in church four times in my life — the past four weeks at Lakeshore St. Andrew's. I obviously need to know much more to make sense of this but I am committed to doing so."

No one found the film to be "a meaningless experience," as Andrew Faiz described it. On the contrary, many people expressed specific spiritual decisions made as a result of it.

Viewing the scourging of Christ opened a whole new understanding of the willingness of Christ to suffer for me. As Gibson stated, had he portrayed it as vividly as the Romans actually carried out scourgings, it would never have been allowed on the screen.

In encouraging the people of our congregation to see the film, none of us in leadership felt "used"; we regarded it as an amazing opportunity to encourage our people in the pursuit of a heart to follow hard after God.

Andrew Faiz's description of the film as "cartoonish" is vindictive and immature.

Chuck Congram,
Tecumseh, Ont.

The Passion of The Christ has surely separated the sheep from the goats. Mel Gibson's movie is not a disturbing surprise to Christians rooted in Scripture. Consider the description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:14: "... so marred was his appearance beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals."



"Pastor Leith, I represent the city building inspector's office, and we've received several complaints this week from some of your parishioners that the pitch of their wheelchair ramp has gradually been increased far beyond legal code specification."

Mr. Faiz writes that Gibson "is a man of talent and cunning, who has made a movie that promotes a harsh interpretation of the Gospels." It seems to me Mr. Faiz trivializes the suffering our Lord went through to save all of us who believe and accept him into our lives.

Rina Macdonald,
Barrie, Ont.

Andrew Faiz takes issue with many aspects of Mel Gibson's movie. He should remember the movie was not intended to be about the life of Jesus but about the last 12 hours of Jesus' life. Some flashback scenes made sense out of what was happening in the movie to those who know Scripture. Mr. Gibson's stated intent for those who do not understand the meaning of the movie is that they be led to read the Bible and discover what it is all about.

Mr. Faiz also said Gibson "has chosen to turn the story of Jesus into a vulgar and simple-minded screed." Yes, the arrest, scourging and crucifixion of Jesus was vulgar. No less vulgar is Mr. Faiz's flippant and irreverent attitude (his banana peel reference).

How can Mr. Faiz say Gibson "promotes a harsh interpretation of the Gospels"? All of the Gospels record extremely harsh treatment of Jesus. If anything, Mel Gibson didn't portray the full horror. Jesus' suffering ought to drive us to the foot of his cross in deep humility, not thumbing our noses at someone else's efforts to portray the reality of his Passion.

Jean Clelland,
Calgary

I was disappointed again to see orthodoxy assailed in the not well-masked punches thrown in the editor's April column and Andrew Faiz's theologically slanted critique of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of The Christ*. Mr. Faiz is welcome to his opinion, but his flagrant diatribe against those who have a different view of this work of art reveals an ideological fundamentalism that fails to offer balance to *Record* readers.

Making a difference

Photo: Karen Plater, PWS&D



A handful of radishes. They don't seem like much, but these radishes are helping Mayan women provide for their families and send their children to school.

In Guatemala, to be a Mayan woman is to be the lowest rung of society. They are discriminated against because they are women and because they are Mayan. The Fraternidad of Mayan Presbyterians had been working to help Mayan women break cycles of poverty through literacy, income generation and human rights programs.

In this community, with PWS&D's support, groups of women had been given loans from the Fraternidad to buy seeds to grow vegetables and potatoes. They were entering into their second growing cycle and told us that the money they were able to earn from their vegetables was enough to send their children to school.

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Eleanor

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letters

continued

I was hoping the editorial would offer some intellectual balance but, in my opinion, it was woefully lacking. Perhaps the *Record* could have looked to the editorial staff of most major North American weekly magazines in search of a spiritual equilibrium. Even the Holy Week edition of *Maclean's* magazine featured stories of Christianity's witness growing and thriving in Canada.

Presbyterians should not be made to feel guilty for having their faith challenged and enriched by a depiction of the story of the Passion of our Lord. And remember, Jesus was not only a good man; Jesus was the Son of God, our Redeemer, who died to take away the sins of the world.

*Rev. Dr. Lonnie S. Atkinson,
Ingersoll, Ont.*

In *The Passion of The Christ*, Mr. Faiz says Jesus comes off "as a crazy person — spouting talk of his own divinity and power." If Mr. Faiz had been there at the Crucifixion, would he have said this? Others did.

Mr. Faiz denies the sacrifice Jesus made when he says, "If Jesus had died slipping on a banana peel or quietly in his sleep, he would still ... have died for our sins." The Gospels repeatedly call Jesus a sacrificial lamb — there must be the spilling of blood. If God saw no need for Jesus to die so horribly, Jesus would not have been scourged and crucified. Didn't he ask for the cup to be taken away if it were his Father's will?

Mr. Faiz's overriding criticism is that the horror and brutality of the film reduce Jesus to a "cartoonish bloody Jesus." But it cannot be denied Roman scourgings and crucifixions were very vulgar, very horrible, very brutal and meant to demean the victim. Surely this was why the religious leaders insisted on crucifixion, believing Jesus would then lose credibility with the people. We have become accustomed to a sanitized depiction of the Crucifixion in western art; *The Passion of The Christ* showed it for what it was.

Mr. Faiz found the film anti-Semitic. I didn't. The snide remark that the reli-

gious leaders who wanted to demean Jesus "happen to be Jewish" does not prove anti-Semitism. They were Jewish because Jesus was Jewish, lived in a Jewish community and was the fulfillment of God's covenant with the Jewish people.

*William Duthie,
Aurora, Ont.*

In the April *Record*, David Harris and Andrew Faiz criticized *The Passion of The Christ*. But God helped me use the movie to share my faith.

A Muslim woman I met recently told me she would like to see the movie. I was able to share that Christians believe Jesus is God come to Earth and that he paid the price for all the sin of all humanity on the cross. She told me a little of what she knew about Jesus and asked who Peter and Paul were. We had a kind and sharing conversation with no animosity. I gave her some material from our church to help her understand the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Another person told me he was raised Roman Catholic, so I asked him about the Stations of the Cross that were represented in the movie. He tried to tell me but said, "I guess I better ask my mom and dad because I no longer remember what they are."

A friend asks me questions about my faith from time to time. God used the movie to help me share what the Scriptures say about Jesus being the sinless Son of God, that not all the Jewish leaders were against Christ (such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea) and that many people then, most of them Jews, were horrified at what took place. My friend thinks he will read the Bible for himself to check this out.

*Carol Fraser,
Calgary*

The Passion of The Christ has caused considerable furore because of its alleged anti-Semitism. The adjective "Semitic" applies accurately to only two matters: language (e.g., Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic) and physical appearance. Mel

Gibson, a Roman Catholic, has chosen to proclaim his pro-Christian faith, but this is not the same as being "anti" other faiths. He is an American actor who lived some of his younger years in Australia. An examination of some of his earlier films might trace a path to the present:

Gallipoli: The failed assault on Turkey during the First World War when Australians and New Zealanders suffered huge casualties — a transition period in Middle Eastern history.

Braveheart: William Wallace, a Scottish patriot at a time of transition between feudalism and nationalism, was executed for treason to a feudal but foreign monarch, Edward I, Hammer of the Scots.

The Patriot: The American Revolution, in which a native-born North American was forced by circumstances to become involved, was another global transition period.

The Passion of The Christ: Palestine was on the southeastern frontier of Imperial Rome in a transition period for Jews, Greeks, Romans and Arabs. The Jewish population, newly conquered and monotheistic, had to keep a low profile within a pagan empire where the emperor was recognized as the supreme god. Less than a century before Jesus, a slave and gladiator named Spartacus led a revolt of more than 100,000 slaves and controlled southern Italy from 73 BC until 71 BC when they were defeated by Crassus Dives. This would have remained in the minds of the Roman leaders. Crucifixion was standard capital punishment then, and more than 20,000 followers of Spartacus were crucified along the Via Appia.

Mel Gibson could just as easily and just as wrongly be accused of being anti-English, anti-monarchist, anti-imperialist, anti-military and anti-war as anti-Semitic. He merely chose to state his pro-Christian faith in the medium he knows best — film.

*Kennedy Maconochie,
Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Que.*

Was Pontius Pilate Italian?

The April editorial on *The Passion of The Christ* states that "the word of God says

Italians tortured and executed Jesus." Really?

There were no "Italians" prior to the liberation and unification of city-states by Giuseppe Garibaldi in the 1860s. In fact, the Austrian diplomat Klemens Metternich considered "Italy" to be nothing but "a geographical expression" before Garibaldi's campaigns.

Pontius Pilate was a Roman official, not an Italian. He was a cruel Gentile weakling who tried to wash his conscience with water as he handed Jesus over to a mob manipulated by a Jewish hierarchy.

*Mariano Di Gangi,
Nepean, Ont.*

Pray and respond

In his letter (April issue), Rudy Kernohan chastised the church for ignoring the suffering caused by HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. In 2003, we travelled to Malawi to witness the AIDS pandemic first-hand so we could raise awareness among, especially, Presbyterian Canadians. We felt called by God to go, and part of that call came from a *Record* article about AIDS in Africa. We received total support from the national church and our congregation.

Since our return, we have addressed more than 40 groups, including service clubs, schools, community groups and churches. We have spoken to United Church, Anglican and Presbyterian congregations, and people in every church have asked how they could respond to this crisis. We have not been disappointed. It is only through knowledge and understanding that we can respond in the way God wants us to. Praying for those enduring AIDS and other diseases is not hypocritical but the first step in our response. The people of Malawi welcome our prayers because they know God will work miracles through them.

*Mike and Debbie Burns,
Kitchener, Ont.*

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

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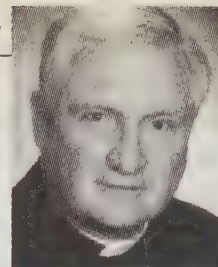
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Living in community is at the heart of the Trinity

June 6 is Trinity Sunday on the church calendar this year — a day when the church celebrates and focuses on the mystery, wonder and joy of its confession: “We believe in one God, eternal Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one, one in three, equal in power and glory. God is the Father to whom we come, the Son through whom we come, the Spirit by whom we come” (*Living Faith* 1.5). This affirmation stands at the heart of our spirituality and theology. Such a mystery prompts the faithful to engage in endless exploring, musing, reflecting and probing the confession that God is one being yet three persons.

I find the words of Prof. Stephen Reynolds, author of *Christ Our Passover: Meditations on the Mystery of Salvation*, refreshing and helpful as I muse and reflect on the doctrine of the Trinity. He suggests the Trinity be imagined in terms of polyphony. He defines polyphony as “many sounds — a variety of voices singing in consort, in such a way that their variety is heard as a unity; indeed, in such a way that their variety is their unity.” He continues: “For unity is not the same as uniformity. Uniformity is the quashing of variety and diversity, so that all voices sound the same. Unity, on the contrary, presumes diversity and variety, and so is a matter of combining distinct voices in mutual relation to one another in order to enrich the music.

“Think of the Trinity as if it were divine polyphony, a consort so united in their variegated expression of the one divine nature that the diversity of the three voices, the three persons, is the divine unity.” He writes: “The mutual interaction of the persons is how the divine nature exists; the one divine nature is the

song that this three-personed polyphony sings, and sings eternally.” Elsewhere in the same book, he comments: “But God ... is a diversified unity. That is to say, the unity of God is never without the diversity of the three persons; and the diversity of the three persons is always within the unity of a single life.”

On the same day the church in the world celebrates the mystery of the Trinity, the 130th General Assembly of our communion begins at a service in

The Triune God has given us a precious gift by which to live together

Oshawa, Ont. Minister and elder commissioners from across Canada will gather for worship, learning, fellowship and decision-making. How fitting for a branch of Christ’s church to begin its annual deliberations on Trinity Sunday. Let me explain.

When the community of faith gathers in such an assembly, there will be variety and diversity in the expression of our common faith; this has been the case throughout the history of Christ’s church. According to Paul in his correspondence with the Corinthians, diversity is a gift from God, a gift that greatly enriches the tapestry that is the Christian community. Nonetheless, this diversity sometimes creates significant and trying challenges for the community of faith to the point that its unity becomes strained. Such a strain causes some to consider calling for uniformity and others for considering division. It is at this point that the doc-

trine of the Trinity is instructive for us: the polyphony we see in God invites the community that worships, loves and seeks to serve God to reflect, despite its frailty and limitations, that same polyphony. Prof. Reynolds declares: “For it is our very diversity as a community — as a community in communion — that makes us the image and likeness of God.”

The doctrine of the Trinity is also instructive to us as we seek to live in unity with one another in the face of some of our diversity. It is our confidence that the Triune God has given us a precious means by which to live together. This gift is our polity (our form of church government), which Stephen Kendall, principal clerk, described in a paper on Presbyterian polity as “an act of grace for the benefit of our life together as one branch of Christ’s church.” He also stated: “There is always, through polity, shared wisdom, prayerful discernment and a sense of working together with and for one another. Through our polity, we offer allegiance first to Jesus Christ.” Through our system of church courts, our church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seeks to provide the place for our living together, furthering the mission of the church, caring for one another and promoting discipleship.

Among other things at the 130th General Assembly, commissioners will be asked to discuss a proposed policy having to do with how we live together in the community of faith in the midst of some of the realities of our time. The policy entitled *Leading With Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada* will be referred to sessions and presbyteries for study and comment. Work on

this policy began in 2000, and drafts have been prepared since then. It asks the church to: (a) engage in equipping leadership for ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults and (b) work actively to ensure a safe environment for that community. Through this means, the church will seek to lead with care.

The work has been done in a variety of ways, including consultation with a congregation that developed its own policy and with other denominations. A draft of the policy has been considered by sessions and presbyteries, and their responses reveal considerable diversity of opinion: some welcome such a policy, wondering why it wasn't done sooner, while others are troubled there is a need for such policy. In any case, the church will reflect on how best to imitate the care for one another so apparent in the early Christian community described in Acts 2.

My prayer is that, as the church deals with this substantive issue and other issues, it will seek to be polyphonous — maintaining a healthy tension between unity and diversity. I pray the church will be guided by the Spirit to make wise and careful use of one of the many gifts of the Triune God: the gift of our form of living together that we call "Presbyterian polity" or "Presbyterian church government."

Please pray for the commissioners of the 130th General Assembly in your daily devotions.

Sandy MacDonald

Moderator's itinerary

April 18
St. Mark's, Charlottetown
(arranged after publication)

June 4
Installation of the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada at Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton, Ont.

June 6
Amberlea, Pickering, Ont. (morning)
130th General Assembly, Oshawa, Ont. (evening)

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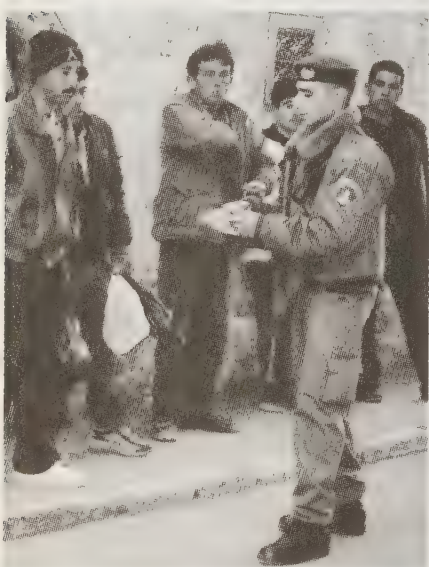
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Record and Glad Tidings win church press awards for 2003

The *Presbyterian Record* received nine awards for 2003 at two recent church press events held in Toronto: two at the Associated Church Press convention, held April 18-21, and seven at the Canadian Church Press convention, held May 6-7.

At the ACP convention, Peter Plymley II received an award of merit for a second-place tie in the magazine column category. Staff writer Amy Sedlezky also received an award of merit in a tie for second in the denominational magazine feature category. Her article, *Where Have They Gone?* (September) was described by the judges as "thoughtful and thorough ... with solid research and analysis."



Michael McAteer's photo from the March 2003 *Record* won first prize in the CCP's colour photo category.

that accompanied his article *A Complex Conflict and a Deadly Toll* (March) completed the first-prize awards. The photo of Palestinian men having their identity papers checked was described as "a succinct testament to the power relationship between the region's people."

The *Record* also received four honourable mention awards from the CCP: one for general excellence — "Tons of thought-provoking material throughout"; one for original artwork for Lester Clarke's illustration for *Where Have They Gone?* (September); one for the black and white photo of Rev. Laurence DeWolfe by Dan Callis (February); and one for April's front cover, *Sex Issues*, illustrated by Ed Schnurr.

Proving that big things come in small packages, *Glad Tidings*, the national magazine of the Women's Missionary Society, received three awards at the conventions. At the ACP event, the magazine received an honourable mention (third place) for the feature article by Ian Gillespie, *Living Lines Group Has the Write Stuff* (January/February). That award was followed by two honourable mentions from the CCP: one in the theological reflection/inspirational category for Rev. Joe Reed's article, *Reverse Mission* (May/June), and one for editor June Stevenson's poem *Autumn Artistry* (September/October).

At the CCP convention, the *Record* received three first-place and four honourable mention awards. Peter Plymley II, who has been a prizewinner at one or other of the two conventions for five consecutive years, was recognized with a first prize from the CCP for original written humour. Any reader who has ever looked forward to a cup of [your beverage here] and Mr. Plymley's latest column will understand why he was cited for his "easygoing conversational style [that] brings comfort to the reader." Rev. Mark Lewis received a first prize in the opinion piece category for his column, *Who Is Really on the Lord's Side?* (May), an article that, according to the judges, "inspires soul-searching." Michael McAteer's colour photo

Interfaith group's book reveals shocking story of poverty in Ontario

Ontario's poorest citizens have seen their incomes plummet by 34 per cent since 1995. A quarter of the children whose families use food banks and depend on social assistance go hungry at least once a week. Twice as many parents go hungry.

These are a few key findings in *Lives in the Balance*, a hard-hitting new book about poverty in Ontario, based on consultations involving 1,500 people across the province by the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (to which The Presbyterian Church in Canada belongs). ISARC's social audit of Ontario points to a worsening social deficit of poverty, hunger and homelessness. More than 300,000 citizens rely on food banks. Many are people on social assistance, battered by the 21.6 per cent cut in social assistance rates by the former Ontario government in 1995 and by inflation, for a total loss in income of 34 per cent. Meanwhile, the housing crisis is so bad, says ISARC, it is actually breaking up families. A growing number of children, whose parents cannot find or afford decent shelter, are being taken into care by Children's Aid Societies.

The interfaith group is suggesting a tax increase that would see average-income families pay an additional \$2.50 per week (the cost of a coffee and doughnut, the group says). Such an increase would raise an additional \$1.25 billion — money that could be used to fund higher social assistance rates and build 20,000 affordable homes, among other things.

While charting the human costs of the former Conservative government's Common Sense Revolution, *Lives in the Balance* also challenges the current Liberal government to carry out its election promises. "While governments have put energy into high profile issues like health and education, and fretted constantly about the fiscal deficit, not enough attention has been paid to the social deficit," the ISARC says.

United Church to appear before Supreme Court in same-sex marriage hearing

The United Church of Canada has announced that it has been granted the right to intervene in the Supreme Court of Canada hearing on same-sex marriage scheduled for October.

In its request to appear, the United Church argued that, as one of only three Christian churches that perform same-sex marriages, it had a direct interest in the issues being raised. It said the United Church would offer a unique perspective by bringing philosophical, religious, social, theological and moral arguments that support equal marriage for people regardless of their sexual orientation. The request for intervener status suggested that, in a debate that is too often characterized as pitting people of faith against each other on secular equality values, the Supreme Court needed to hear the perspective of a mainline Christian church that sees same-sex marriage and opposite-sex couples as being equal in the eyes of God. "Christian morality and religious principles require that same-sex couples have access to the same rights as opposite-sex couples."

The church's motion concluded in a tone of optimism: "The United Church has embraced the challenges that have arisen from issues of sexual orientation over the past 20 years and can bear witness that issues of sexual orientation can be resolved in a context of respect for different positions, with integrity, and can lead to principled decisions being made that are based on a commitment to justice and law for all. The United Church believes that such decisions result in a more inclusive community, where healing of past divisions can occur and where the total community becomes healthier and more enriched."

Pastor sought to run Web church

The Church of England is setting up a church on the Internet and is advertising for a half-time Web pastor to run it. The initiative comes from the diocese of Oxford, using money given by church commissioners to each of the Church of England's 44 dioceses to fund pioneering projects that would support the church.

The church has its own website [www.i-church.org] that sets out its purpose as providing: a community for those who wish to explore Christian discipleship but are not able or do not wish to be participant members of a congregation, additional support to those who do not find all they need within their worshipping community, and continuity for those whose travel schedules make it difficult to establish and maintain relationships with a geographical Christian community.

Membership in the "i-church" community is open to anyone, regardless of doctrinal allegiance, willing to make a basic commitment to prayer, study and social action.

The Church Herald

Ecuhome celebrates 20th anniversary

Ecuhome Corporation, an interdenominational group providing housing and support services for disadvantaged and street people, celebrated its 20th anniversary in March. Ecuhome currently houses close to 500 people in 56 houses and three apartment buildings in Toronto. It was founded in 1984 by seven Toronto church groups, including the presbyteries of East and West Toronto. Both presbyteries have members on the corporation's board.

Presbyterian Record / June 2004

Patricia Dutcher-Walls appointed to VST faculty

Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, assistant



professor of Hebrew Scripture and Old Testament at Knox College, Toronto, since 1995, has been appointed associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Vancouver

School of Theology, effective July 1. A minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Prof. Dutcher-Walls has an M.Div. (Hons.) from Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass., and a ThD (with distinction) from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif.

Downloading Christian teens show there's nothing sacred

Christian teens are stealing Jesus music, reports the *Dallas Morning News*, adding that they are doing it through Internet downloads and CD burnings at nearly the same rate as non-Christians are pirating secular music. This revelation, from a recent study done for the Gospel Music Association, has jolted many in the evangelical music industry. "I'm surprised and disappointed that the behaviour isn't that ardently different between Christians and non-Christians," said John Styll, association president.

Globe and Mail

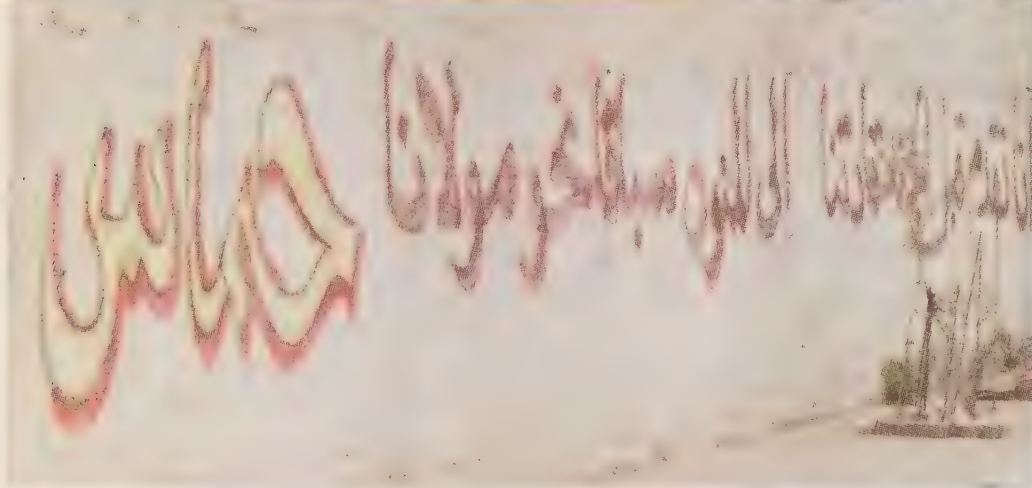
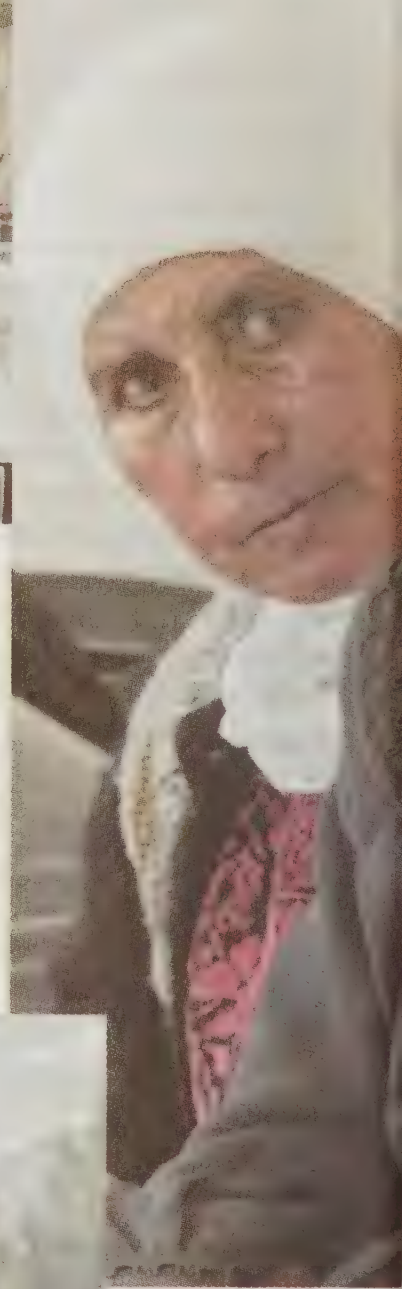
New staff at 50 Wynford

May Maltby has joined the staff in financial services at church offices as assistant accountant/payroll administrator, succeeding Rosalind Cammidge.

May, who was previously self-employed, also serves as treasurer of St. Andrew's, Brampton, Ont.



Can the Middle East



have peace?



Clockwise from top left: The Kalandia checkpoint in the north of Jerusalem is the gateway to Ramallah; Palestinian women whose husbands and sons are in Israeli jails often aren't allowed to visit them; the Dome of the Rock dominates Jerusalem's skyline; the KAIROS delegation returns from Gaza through the Erez checkpoint; pale, malnourished mothers and babies in Gaza City visit a church-supported medical clinic; an Israeli soldier checks Palestinians' travel permits at the Huwara checkpoint south of Nablus in the West Bank; Hamas slogans are everywhere in Nablus — the lefthand word spells Hamas in Arabic.

All photos by David Harris



From March 11-25, a Canadian ecumenical delegation visited Christians and church partner organizations in the Middle East. Three church leaders headed the nine-member group, including *Presbyterian Record* editor David Harris.

The visit was under the auspices of KAIROS, the ecumenical peace and justice organization of Canada's mainline churches.

The following are some reflections from that trip and a brief analysis of the politics of the region. Stories collected during this trip will continue to appear in future issues of the *Record*.

Political complexities, rights and wrongs, cloud possibility of simple solutions

by David Harris

The Bible's poetic descriptions of the cedars of Lebanon and a land flowing with milk and honey, as rich as they are, scarcely do justice to the Middle East. It might best be described as a riot of jewel-toned raw silks: emerald, topaz, aquamarine, sapphire and ruby. It's a place where ocean, desert, forests, hills and plains all crash together in spectacular scenery.

Politically, however, the region is predominantly grey — dark, brooding, foggy grey — nothing like the stark black and white images portrayed unrelentingly in ideological columns masquerading as analysis and in quick news flashes.

To be sure, warring factions play up these differences. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, each portrays the other as trying to push the opponent into the sea. Reality suggests something more complex, but nuance is what is drowned in the sea, at least as reported in the media.

The errors most commentators make are rooted in assuming Middle Eastern politics is broadly akin to Western politics. It is not. The classic example that appears tirelessly is that, if only "the Palestinians" would stop bombing Israel, all would be well.

Setting aside the question of whether all would be well if "the Palestinians" just stopped their violence, the notion that Palestinians are any more politically cohesive than Canadians (even with our status Natives, alienated Westerners and separatist Quebecers) is absurd. Even the heavyweight political groups of Hamas and Fatah (Yasser Arafat's organization), let alone members of small civil society organizations, have limited political support depending on the region.

Hamas (an Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement), for instance, is portrayed exclusively as a terrorist organization. There is an important truth in the statement, but it is only part of the picture. In Gaza, where support for

Hamas is strongest, it is popular largely because it provides social services where no one else is providing them. When one hears that 20 per cent of Palestinians support Hamas, it doesn't mean nearly a quarter of Palestinians support suicide bombers. Far from it. Palestinian sources say maybe a tenth of Hamas supporters condone violence. Most of them are from the ultra-poor and uneducated. Founded in 1987-88, partly as a rival group to Yasser Arafat's Fatah-controlled Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas still has a charter calling for the

Although water is scarce, leadership is actually the scarcest resource in this region

destruction of Israel. Consequently, Canada is among many countries that regard all branches of Hamas as a terrorist organization. But even Palestinians who oppose Hamas shake their head at the irony of allegations of Western intelligence sources that Israel has supported Hamas at times in order to try to destabilize Arafat's PLO.

Fatah, which seized control of the PLO after the 1967 war, also has the support of about 20 per cent of Palestinians. It maintains that support largely through graft and corruption, and is scorned by Palestinians who are trying to build a peaceful state to coexist in the region with Israel. Money, however, still buys considerable power and influence, and the oil-rich Gulf States continue to support Arafat because he is still Mr. Palestine. Whether deliberately or through bungling, the result of Israel's destruction of most of Arafat's Ramallah compound in September 2002 was only to raise his flagging popularity.

Still, that only about a fifth of Palestinians are reckoned to support Arafat

and Fatah is testament to the changing times. Following the Six Day War in 1967, Arafat and the PLO moved to Jordan. They were such a powerful and destabilizing force in the country, the Hashemite rulers of Jordan under King Hussein expelled them in 1970. The PLO took up residence in Lebanon in 1971 where it remained until 1982. After persistent missile attacks on its northern territory, Israel seized control of south Lebanon, forcing the PLO out. Arafat then moved his headquarters to Tunis, but was still a major political force. In 1987, Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza began the first intifada, or uprising. The next year, Arafat formally recognized Israel's right to exist in a speech to the United Nations. And in 1993, Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin reached a deal for limited Palestinian self-rule with the Oslo Accord. The following year, Arafat and Israel's foreign minister, Shimon Peres, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The political road since then has gone up and down like a rollercoaster. Arafat is holed up in a compound that was Israel's military headquarters in the region from 1967 to 1994, where he works (and apparently sleeps) in a white room about five by eight metres. A long table runs the length of the room, accommodating about two dozen people.

A diminutive man, Arafat stands in the doorway to the room, obliging visitors to shake hands with him. The room has only one window that is heavily blocked. He recites a speech peppered with "my partner Rabin and I ... " referring to the late prime minister of Israel who was assassinated in 1995, and recounts all the real and alleged infractions by Israel in the peace process since then. "Who could believe it?" is his constant refrain.

What's hard to believe is the constant escalation of violence on both sides. Israeli government officials often blame



The face of a woman with male relatives in an Israeli jail waits to tell her story at a support group for other women like her in a small village bordering East Jerusalem.

Arab culture, pointing to the pervasive “eye for an eye” mentality. Yet Israel justifies its “targeted assassinations” by saying Arab culture would interpret lack of response as a sign of weakness. With the 1973 Yom Kippur War barely a generation ago, it is difficult not to have some sympathy for Israel’s position. On the other hand, the world has changed much since then, especially since Sept. 11, 2001. Given the virtually unqualified support of the U.S. Congress, Israel knows the United States will protect it. Further, the 2002 Arab Summit in Beirut essentially acknowledged the right of Israel to exist. By far the majority of Palestinians accept a two-state solution (Israel and Palestine). Many Palestinian leaders even agree that any settlement with Israel would require transferring some land in the West Bank to Israel —

how much and where are the contentious issues.

And although water is usually regarded as the scarcest of the prime natural resources in the region, two weeks of talking to Palestinians and Israelis leads one to realize that leadership is the scarcest resource. Many Palestinians freely admit they would like to be rid of both Hamas and Fatah; there are also people in Israel who know that, as long as the Likud party is in power, peace is unlikely to be achieved. They also admit that fear in Israel — which is a real enough emotion given the suicide bombings — has all but wiped out an effective opposition to the government.

After visiting people on each side of this divide and experiencing something of their daily life, it is difficult not to feel depressed and hopeless. Fear and anger



are present everywhere: Israelis worry about suicide bombers; Palestinians worry about outpost settlers who, with the connivance of the government, steal Palestinian land and burn their crops. Israelis also worry about whether other Arab countries or terrorists will attack them using the Palestinian problem as the excuse; Palestinians are angry about the daily harassment they endure at checkpoints in their own country and about a supposed security wall that often does no more than separate Palestinians from Palestinians, divide neighbourhoods and result in olive and citrus groves being bulldozed. The fear and anger on both sides is understandable, but the reaction is not. Mistrust is endemic. History broods over the region.

Until someone deliberately blinks — which, given that Israel is the stronger of the two parties both politically and militarily, really means the Israelis — there is little chance for peace. In the meantime, there are seeds of hope. There are small groups working to build up civil society, whether by providing social services such as medical clinics or by promoting peaceful dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. These individuals and groups work to bring peace and justice to the region. They are doing their best to clear away that grey fog. **R**

Fear is real – and all too common

by David Harris

Last month's editorial recounted an incident in which a young Palestinian woman coming through the Erez checkpoint in northern Gaza caused a moment of fear to surge through the KAIROS delegation waiting to be escorted back to their van after a day in Gaza. The woman looked scared. We were scared. The soldiers' voices betray they were scared. All of a sudden, the retractable handle on the suitcase looked remarkably like the detonation handle of an old-fashioned blasting box. A careful hand search revealed only the woman's clothes. No bomb.

Exhale.

It's when everyone is scared like that mistakes happen. In January, at this very checkpoint, a 22-year-old mother of two faked a medical condition that she said would set off the alarms and was taken to a waiting room to be checked by a female soldier. While waiting, she blew herself up, killing four Israelis. Palestinians told us she wasn't a member of any political party, only seeking revenge for the Israeli army killing her fiancé a few months before. Whatever her motivation, there is reason to be fearful, even of young women.

Our military escort leaving Erez was a young woman too. She looked barely 18. We had encountered her early in the morning when we cleared Israeli security to enter Palestine. She is one of the many teen soldiers we saw. For all of Israel's vaunted military machine, one wonders how well these soldiers are trained and supervised the way they slum around, M-16 assault rifles slung on their bodies any which way: barrel up, barrel down, upside down — in just about any position that renders the wearer defenceless. This woman's rifle is two-thirds her height. If it weren't for her permed and highlighted hair, she could almost hide behind the massive walkie-talkie she waves about. She seems oblivious at one point that her wispy frame is next to a far more substantial metal door frame that

she could easily be checked into it, leaving someone with her assault rifle in their hands. There are no soldiers with weapons at ready to stop such an event before many would be dead and wounded.

At the Huwara checkpoint in the middle of the West Bank en route to Nablus — why is it there? one wonders, since it's not at an entry-point into Israel — the soldiers are all male, most in their late teens with a corporal in his early 20s in charge. We are initially denied the right to pass through on our way to Nablus, although it has been arranged for some

**'We are killing it every day ...
every checkpoint is killing peace
in people's hearts'**

*Father Youssef,
Greek Catholic priest in Nablus*

time through diplomatic channels between the Canadian and Israeli governments. One soldier who speaks English feeds us various lines he's presumably been told to recite. He delivers them with the kind of smile that says, "I'm making this up, but who cares, because you're not going anywhere."

"No, you can't go in," he says.

"Why?"

"For your own safety."

"But we're meeting friends who are expecting us. They will take care of us."

"No, they might throw stones at you."

"Why?"

"Because you have Israeli [licence] plates."

"We're willing to take that risk."

"We don't want anything to happen to you." And on it goes.

Less than an hour later, after intervention by Canadian diplomats, either the Israeli government is convinced Canada doesn't care what happens to us and won't hold Israel responsible, or they no

longer care what happens to us, or the point has been made they have the guns and don't *have* to let us in, and we are finally given permission to continue on to Nablus. There is little doubt they aren't thrilled to have us wandering about the West Bank. Especially in Nablus.

Nablus is the ancient biblical city of Shechem. The tomb of Joseph is nearby as is Jacob's well, where it is believed Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman. It is now in the crypt of a new Greek Orthodox church. And you can have a free drink from the well. Nablus is also a known base for Hamas terrorists. Their flags wave everywhere. Their graffiti slogans are sprayed on walls and under photographs of young men killed by whatever means in clashes with Israel.

The Palestinian National Authority's Governor of Nablus is Mahmoud Aloul. One of his sons has already died in the conflict. He admits that after former Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination at the hands of a right-wing Israeli, Palestinian as well as Israeli violence has increased. But violence, he says, "will encourage those who are stubborn on the Palestinian side." He believes ideologically driven violence is "very, very small. We can control it. We can stop it." On the other hand, "we can't control reactive violence." One wants to believe him, but who knows what to believe in this part of the world. Both sides have their truth-tellers, but politicians in any country are skilled at spinning stories to their advantage.

But there are many more people in Nablus who are decent, honest people. They just want to live. Father Youssef, the local Greek Catholic priest, tells us he cried when his 10-year-old granddaughter asked him what future she had in Nablus. "What kind of peace are we looking for?" he asks. "We are killing it every day ... every checkpoint is killing peace in people's hearts." ■

Church groups offer hope to society's rejects

Rev. John Eter puts a friendly headlock on a small boy of about 10. "He likes to burn himself when we ask him to do something he doesn't want to," says Eter, using his left hand to pull back the boy's hair revealing scars from a burn. "He'll pour alcohol on himself and then set himself alight, don't you?" he says, turning towards the boy with a smile. "We have to get you to stop doing that."

The boy is one of about 80 children staying at the Lebanese Evangelical Institute for Social Work and Development's Home of Hope. The home sits high on a hill on the edge of Beirut overlooking the city. It encapsulates both the despair and hope for so many in this land of contrasts. Eter says there are 12,000-15,000 street kids in Lebanon, mostly in the Beirut area. The majority are from Syria and the Gulf States. They come for the same reasons children and teenagers come to cities in Canada like Halifax, Toronto or Vancouver — to escape brutal conditions at home and to find work. And, as in Canadian cities, they are preyed on, becoming drug addicts and pushers, prostitutes and petty thieves, going hungry and often without shelter.

It seems so little to be able to offer a home for fewer than one in 100, but it is a start.

Lebanese civil society is built around the major cultural-religious divisions of the country. There are about 17 major divisions of Muslims and Christians, and their power-sharing arrangements are ancient and complex. The 16-year civil war that ended in 1991 was largely about changing the political structures so that the rising Muslim population would be more fairly represented. (Christians in Lebanon, particularly the French-educated Roman Catholic Maronites, are the country's elite. Like most elites, they control the wealth and power but have fewer children than the underclasses. They have also been leaving Lebanon in droves for decades.) The social services financial pie is distributed proportionately among the various groups. Anyone who falls outside these cultural groups is out of

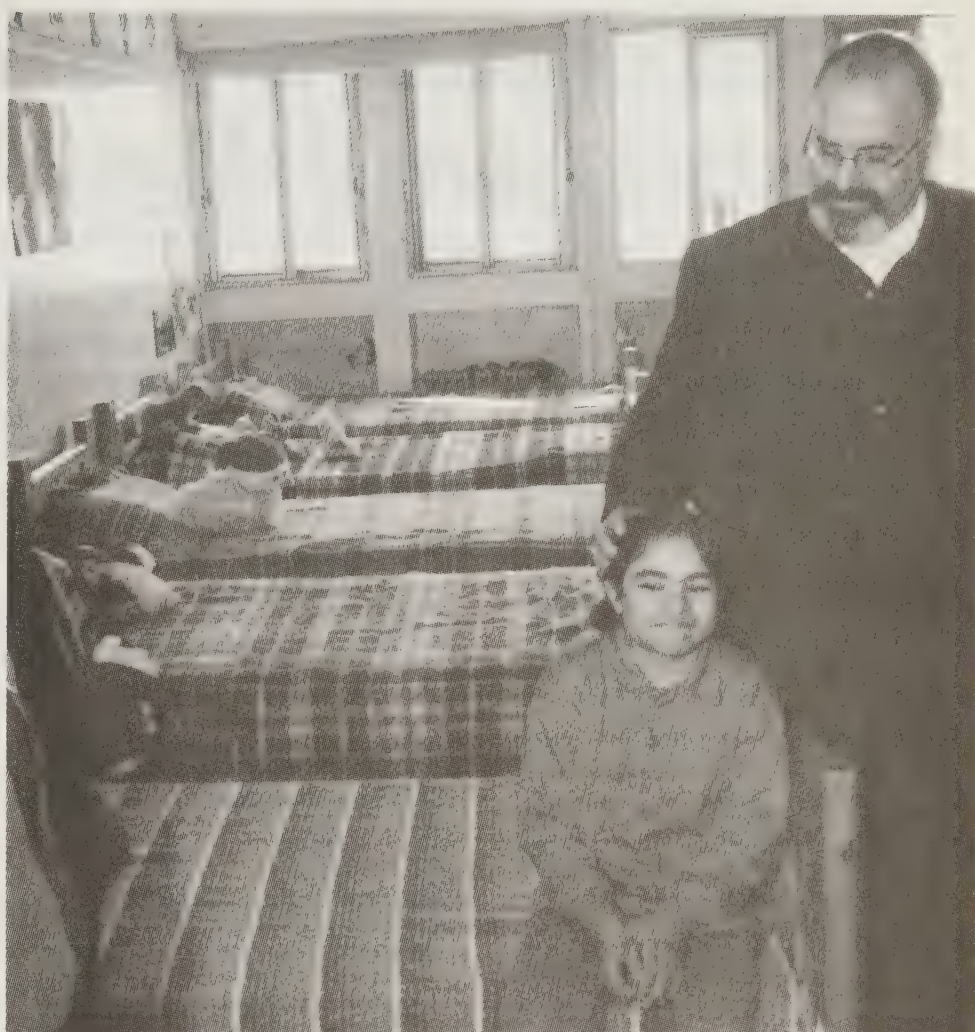


Photo by David Harris

Rev. John Eter runs Home of Hope, a church-sponsored project that takes children and youth off the streets of Beirut and tries to reunite them with their families. The complex takes up to 120 residents; there are up to 15,000 youth on the streets in Beirut.

luck. There are no government-provided social services.

The Middle East Council of Churches is one organization that works to fill these gaps. It is supported financially by a number of church organizations, including KAIROS, which is funded by the Presbyterian and other churches in Canada. Besides the home for street youth, there is a school/daycare facility in the Beka'a Valley for mentally challenged children and youth. Those who can be are trained for possible jobs in the region. Some young men are learning basic car mechanics.

The council also operates the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees. The department runs a variety of programs for refugees in Sabra and Shatila, the unofficial and official refugee camps

respectively in Beirut, as well as programs in the Gaza strip. Malnutrition among newborns and young children is about 60 per cent in Gaza, so a church-funded medical clinic focuses on women's and children's health. There is also a youth vocational training centre.

If peace is ever to flourish in the Middle East, Lebanese, Israelis and Palestinians need to be healthy, cared for and have jobs to support their families. The small seeds of hope provided by Christians around the world who support these enterprises financially build up civil society brick by brick and break down the walls of misunderstanding and mistrust between the region's three faiths. Stories about these ministries will appear in future issues of the *Record*. **R**

DH

East Toronto presbytery says no to temporary approval of same-sex marriage

by Amy Sedlezky

A motion to temporarily let ministers in the Presbytery of East Toronto marry same-sex couples was defeated, but not before presbytery had a long discussion that frequently danced around the issue. The close vote — 23-18 with several abstentions — could well be a sign that change may come.

The decision was in response to a request for guidance from Rev. Jane Swatridge, minister of an East Toronto outreach ministry. In March, a same-sex couple who have been together for 17 years asked her to marry them. A task force was created to study the matter in depth while presbytery considers its position.

In 2002, General Assembly reaffirmed that marriage is “between one man and one woman.” However, this position was questioned by some church members after Ontario’s highest court ruled in June 2003 that same-sex marriage is legal. British Columbia soon followed Ontario’s lead, as did Quebec — where same-sex marriage became legal in March 2004. Following Ontario’s decision, the General Assembly clerks issued an opinion reminding the church of the assembly’s position. Presbyterian ministers were not specifically forbidden to perform such marriages (they would be legal in the eyes of the state), but they would risk being disciplined by their presbyteries if they did so because such a marriage would be deemed contrary to the doctrine and practice of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

“I’m really sad for the couple,” said Ms. Swatridge, who spoke to them the following morning. “They could just go to city hall and have a civil ceremony and that would be the end of it. But they

specifically came to our denomination and wanted the church’s blessing. I’m sad for the church as well because we couldn’t have a really good discussion about this. I was hoping to have an open and honest conversation, but we didn’t.”

Ms. Swatridge is creator of FYI (For Your Inspiration), her presbytery’s ecumenical outreach ministry in the downtown neighbourhood of Toronto known

‘We need time to struggle with the issue more than anything, rather than get people entrenched in their own personal positions’

Rev. Dr. Bob Fourney

as the Annex, for people who have been rejected by or have little experience with the church and are outside a faith community. It began in September 2003 and provides people with informal worship, discussion, pastoral care and a library.

The debate occupied most of the three-hour meeting of presbytery, held April 13 at the national church offices. Although church polity says everyone in attendance is supposed to vote, some abstained. Rev. Bill Elliott, who chaired the missions committee, said although the motion was defeated, seeing it supported by a significant number of presbyters is a sign change may come.

The defeated motion was not brought to presbytery by the missions committee, but was raised by others in response to presbytery’s indecision on three related motions. The missions committee asked presbytery what its position is on same-sex marriage and what direction it will

give to ministers asked to perform such marriages. Subsequent amendments, procedural questions and reluctance to make a decision resulted in presbytery passing those issues to a task force. Presbytery was also asked to give a written response to the couple stating its decision, but it declined the request until it determines its position. Ms. Swatridge was authorized to tell the couple of presbytery’s indecisiveness.

Presbytery moderator Rev. Dr. Bob Fourney said the meeting was the beginning in a long journey to consensus. “It’s part of the birthing experience. You have to go through the pain first — and this begins the pain.” People without strong personal opinions were deliberately chosen for the task force, freeing them to explore the matter objectively. “We need time to struggle with the issue more than anything, rather than get people entrenched in their own personal positions,” said Dr. Fourney. “We need to ... figure out how best to serve the church.” The task force was given an unlimited amount of time to study the issue.

Ms. Swatridge said she does not wish to defy the church or threaten the well-being of her new ministry. However, if the discipline were only a “minor slap on the wrist,” she said she would be willing to bless the union of the couple. If the punishment were more severe, she said she would think twice as she “wouldn’t be much good to anybody” if stripped of her credentials. She thinks presbytery’s reluctance to decide is partially because no one wants to blaze a trail. “Nobody wants to touch it. Nobody wants to be the first,” she said. “But why not set a precedent? Whatever it is we decide on, as long as we stand behind it, then what’s wrong with that?” ■

General Assembly to look at past, present and future

Tom Dickey

Attempting to predict what issues will be the most intriguing (or the most time-consuming) at a General Assembly is a bit like trying to pick the winner of the Stanley Cup in April — you just never know. With that in mind, here are a few matters that might be of note.

Of course, there have been many changes over the years as one General Assembly has flowed gently into another. One sign of the times will be evident when commissioners discuss the document *Leading with Care: A Policy for*

Predicting the big issues at assembly is like predicting the winner of the Stanley Cup in April

Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Known in its earlier stages as *A Faithful Response: A Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults*, the 47-page document has been refined and revised since work on it first began in 2000. Sessions and presbyteries have been asked to consider it and provide their responses.

The Education in Faith and the Justice Ministries departments of the Life and Mission Agency will jointly answer an overture to last year's assembly concerning the impact of violence and sex in the media on children and youth. Their report draws on *Kids' Take on Media*, a Canadian Teachers Federation study of 5,756 students in grades three to 10. The answer to the overture also provides a historical look at other times the denomination has attempted to answer this question and urges actions for the present.

The cost of living has also changed

over the years, and an overture to the Personnel Policy Committee is seeking to address the issue. The overture asks for a review of the present minimum stipend for all professional church workers to determine if minimum stipend levels set by assembly are meeting the needs of professional church workers and congregations. (The last time changes were made to the schedule, other than for a cost of living allowance some years, was in 1989.) Assembly Council will ask General Assembly to approve "that presbyteries be strongly encouraged to engage ministers and congregations annually in discussions concerning their mutual needs and expectations, particularly in regard to stipend, housing and other allowances."

The Task Force on Healing and Reconciliation will begin a process at assembly aimed at creating awareness among church members of the injustices suffered by aboriginal people through the residential school system. The goal is to help congregations build lasting partnerships with aboriginal people through "concrete sustainable projects." The task force now sees itself as more of a design team than a task group and is planning to rename itself.

As well as looking at the past and present, commissioners will be given a possible glimpse of the future. A presentation from the Long-Range Planning Committee, called *Building the Church That Needs to Be*, will provide some suggestions for the future work and direction of the denomination based on responses received from the committee's *Finding God's Opportunities* exercise.

One overture that should interest readers of the *Record* is being brought to the magazine's board of directors by the committee on business of the 130th General Assembly at the request of the session of St. Andrew's, Windsor, Ont. The overture asks that the 130th General

Assembly "instruct the board of the *Presbyterian Record* to reflect more faithfully the doctrine of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, or to do otherwise, as General Assembly, in its wisdom, may deem best."

Stay tuned for the July/August issue for a closer look at the 130th General Assembly. **R**

Wherever two or three gather

Assembly is in Oshawa?
Precisely where is that?
It sounds a bit like a football cheer for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Yes, it's the site for sederunts and yellow-carded voters.
The motions and amendments.
The cars from General Motors.

We'll give them space and
nice green lawns.
New rooms at College Durham.
The thought of less-communal johns will surely help to lure 'em.

And soon they'll know
(just what they think)
— there is no how-to manual!
A dream occurs as spirits sink,
"Let's make these things biennial!"

But commissioners,
both loud and meek,
and Moderator mild,
must make it through Assembly week
no charges being filed.

An easy task?
The church is dead?
Perhaps it needs to be exhumed?
Well, not so fast.
It should be said,
It's burning, not consumed.

— t.m.d.

Canadian ecumenical agency celebrates 60 years

by Amy Sedlezky

The Canadian Council of Churches, the country's largest and oldest ecumenical coalition, celebrated its 60th anniversary on May 13 with an ecumenical service at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, Toronto, where the council first met. The Most Rev. Terence Finlay, Archbishop of Toronto (Anglican), delivered the sermon. He thanked the council for its social action and commitment to Christ in a time of division, secularism and church squabbles. "The church is not on a smooth journey. It gets caught up in the ways of the world, with misplaced values and ways of thinking that are far from what Jesus Christ intended," he said. "But it's a wonderful channel for

people to find a transformed life."

The council was founded in 1944 by 10 denominations who dreamed of coming together to listen, discuss problems and act on injustices. "These folks had a vision of what it would mean for churches to work together and about the unity we have in Jesus Christ," said Rev. Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the council. "We are committed to searching for the unity God intended."

The council is one of the broadest ecumenical organizations in the world with 19 member denominations. It represented more than 45 per cent of the Canadian population at its inception and, when the Canadian Conference of

Catholic Bishops became full members in 1997, about 85 per cent of Canada's Christian faith traditions were represented — including Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed and Orthodox. The addition of a Roman Catholic voice was significant as neither the World Council of Churches nor the U.S. National Council of Churches has a Roman Catholic member.

In 1995, the council moved to a different style of decision-making. Until that time, it sought a majority vote. Today, it works through a forum — a gathering of representatives from each denomination where all voices are heard. Individual members raise issues they feel deserve attention. Those who agree work to-

Ecumenism is not dead, but different

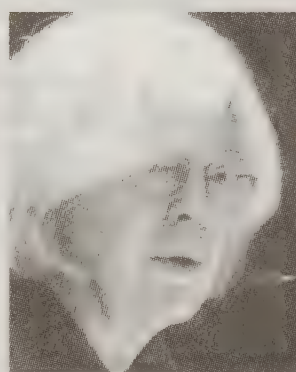
by Amy Sedlezky

To a number of people, ecumenism seems to have lost some steam since its heyday in the 1960s and '70s. "People will say that ecumenism is dead, but they don't know what's going on now," said Sandra Demson, a vice-president at the Canadian Council of Churches. "They're thinking of old ideas of ecumenism, when it was about churches joining together. What it means now is not searching for the majority view" — which is what churches tried to achieve up to the late '80s — "but for hidden unity. We're attentive to commonalities and differences and we're not trying to cover them up," she said of the council that includes Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed and Orthodox members.

The council has been delving into issues of unity and social justice since its inception in 1944. Today, the debate

about same-sex marriage keeps the council busy. "We don't say, 'That's not a Christian position' just because it's different from ours," said Demson about what happens when council opinions conflict. "Respect is the key. That's why ecumenism is extremely relevant in today's fractured world. We do not belittle or make a caricature of other positions."

Such communication is imperative if traditions with long histories of butting heads are to work together. The history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Church has been tumultuous, beginning with the decision of a substantial minority of Presbyterians not



Sandra Demson

Photo by David Harris

to join with the newly formed United Church in 1925. Demson said that, although hard feelings may linger, histories are no reason why denominations can't work on projects they both care about. "It's part of our tradition and it's who we are," she said about the Presbyterian ability to hold onto the

past. "We distinguish ourselves by not joining with the United Church. Now is not the time to revisit the Union, but to come together with the United Church and with other denominations. We can't let our histories stop us."

To raise ecumenism's profile, the council has developed a new program. Friends of the CCC updates laypeople on

gether; those who do not, focus on other issues. The change enabled Roman Catholics to join the council, since the Vatican won't allow membership in an organization if its doctrine has to be subordinate to theirs. The forum model means there are fewer incidents of a

'We are better because, in our differences, we learn from each other'

The Most Rev. Terence Finlay

unified council opinion but, when there is consensus, its message is a powerful lobbying force.

The council's forum model is something Archbishop Terence Finlay applauds. He said it enables the communication and co-operation needed for an "authentic" church — holding true to Christ's teachings and striving for the unity he desired. "Some people put the emphasis on unity in a church that is homogenized — on who is in and who is out of favour, with a rather harsh understanding of God." The church must look past its differences and work in harmony,

the council's projects through newsletters and press releases. "It's a way to reach out to the person in the pew who may not worry about the national church but does have an interest in ecumenical issues," said Demson, a lawyer and elder at Rosedale, Toronto.

Although formally connecting denominations has been given a lower priority, there are several denominations entering into full communion — a relationship where each church maintains its autonomy while recognizing the validity of the other's ordination of clergy. Although not in full communion, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* in 1999. Agreeing that grace and salvation is through faith in Christ alone, the two sides put aside their differences. Demson said this kind of ecumenical spirit must be supported within the church.

But motivating congregations to care about ecumenism can be difficult. The

said the Archbishop of Toronto, and forget the image of the "super church" that was popular 20 years ago. "We are better because, in our differences, we learn from each other," he said.

The council works through two main commissions. The Commission on Faith and Witness seeks understanding of different traditions and debates theological issues. The Commission on Justice and Peace acts on social issues such as child poverty, abortion and anti-Semitism. Senior civil servants have acknowledged that the council's opposition to Canada's involvement in the war in Iraq was instrumental in forming the government's decision not to go to war.

The Presbyterian Church is an active member of the council. Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk, and Rev. Will Ingram are ecumenical officers on the governing board, and Jennifer Geddes is the youth representative on the board. Sandra Demson is a council vice-president and Don Taylor is treasurer. Stephen Allen is convener of the Commission on Justice and Peace and Rev. Dr. Stewart Gillan is convener of the Commission on Faith and Witness. **R**

Very Rev. Lois Wilson was president of the council from 1976 to 1979 and was active in the World Council of Churches. "Ecumenism is not built into the life stance of many Christians," she said. "I wouldn't say ecumenism is dead as a doornail; it's taking different forms. But it's not being institutionally supported by the religious community."

The Anglican Church's ecumenical officer, Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, agrees that struggling denominations may ignore ecumenism. "Churches have a tendency to pull into their shells and protect their flanks, trying to maintain their numbers," said the vice-president of the council from 1988 to 1991. But being a unified presence in society will allow the council to be more influential, she said.

Despite its struggles, ecumenism's future looks bright. "I think the council has always been fragile," said Barnett-Cowan. "That it has survived 60 years in spite of that fragility is a testament to its strength."

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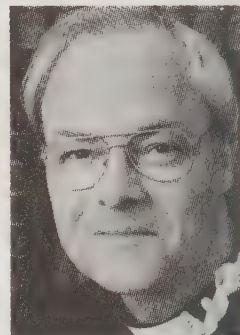
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Scottish church leader named president of Princeton Theological Seminary



LONDON — Princeton Theological Seminary, one of the most prestigious religious training centres in the United States, has looked to an academic, military chaplain and church leader from Scotland for its next president. The seminary, part of the 2.5-million-member Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), has chosen Professor Iain Torrance, outgoing moderator of the Church of Scotland, as its sixth president.

Dr. Torrance, 55, completed his one-year term as leader of Scotland's biggest church in May. When he takes up his new post in July, he will head the largest of the PCUSA's 10 seminaries as well as its oldest. Princeton has a faculty of 53, with 785 students. About 90 other denominations in the United States and abroad are represented among the students on campus. He will succeed Thomas Gillespie, a native of California, who has been president for two decades.

Currently, Dr. Torrance is professor in patristics and Christian ethics at Christ's College, Aberdeen University. He is co-editor of the *Scottish Journal of Theology* and author of several books. These include *Ethics and the Military Community*, reflecting one of his main research interests. For 15 years, he was a chaplain for military reservists. He is a member of the international dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Church. When his appointment was announced, Prof. Torrance was on an official visit to China.

ENI

PCUSA budget cuts to eliminate 37 staff positions

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) staff leaders have finished work on a plan that trims \$4.6 million from its 2005-2006 mission budget and eliminates 37 national staff positions, nine of which were vacant. The plan also realigns the PCUSA's programs to match more closely priorities and objectives established by the General Assembly Council last winter, and continues a three-year trend of "flattening" the management pyramid at the Presbyterian Centre.

The permanent budget cuts were necessary to balance the 2005 and 2006 mission budgets at \$114.4 million. The cuts were made from the \$32.7-million "unrestricted" portion of the mission budget. Less than two decades ago, the bulk of the church's income was unrestricted. Now, because of the dramatic shift to designated giving, less than 29 per cent of the GAC's total income is unrestricted.

"We really are in a time of transition," said GAC executive director John

**'We really are in
a time of trans-
ition, where we
have to look at
how we receive
and distribute
mission funds'**

John Detterick

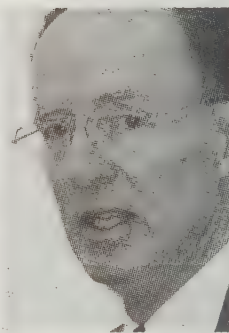


Photo by Danny Bolin

Detterick, "where we have to look at how we receive and distribute mission funds ... and be more proactive in going with the flow of the trend toward designated giving."

Most of the 28 people who lost their jobs, ranging from the lowest level support staff to top managers, finished their work in early May. "Their departure ... tears at the fabric of our life around here," said Kathy Lueckert, the deputy executive director of the council. "We are grateful and thankful for the work they have done and wish them Godspeed."

Mathematician, Quaker, apartheid foe wins biggest cash prize

NEW YORK — An applied mathematics professor, who stood up to the racist ideology of apartheid, has been named the 2004 winner of the most prominent global award given to those linking science with religion — the Templeton Prize. George F.R. Ellis, 64, a Quaker, pacifist and scientist engaged in the discipline of science and religion, has been awarded the 795,000 pounds sterling, (\$1.4 million US) prize that its founder, the U.S.-born Presbyterian investor Sir John Templeton, has stipulated be the largest annual monetary prize given to an individual outside the realm of sports.

Dr. Ellis, a professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cape Town, was honoured for his “bold and innovative” contributions to the dialogue between science and religion. The basis of Prof. Ellis’s work is his advocacy of balancing the faith and hope of religion

with the rationality of science. This, he said, was something borne in large part by his own involvement in South Africa’s peaceful transformation from a racially segregated state to a multiracial democracy.

Prof. Ellis’s career has traversed different fields and worlds. His first book, published in 1973 and co-authored by Stephen Hawking, was a study of the structure of space time. Four years later, he and three other South African colleagues wrote a book chronicling the plight of homeless people under the minority white government in their country. A 2002 book he edited, *The Far-Future Universe: Eschatology from a Cosmic Perspective*, was based on a symposium at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican and included participation



from cosmologists, biologists and theologians.

Prof. Ellis acknowledges his career has incorporated “a considerable breadth of view” and that his scientific inquiry has been deepened by his social activism and vice versa. Another foundational element is his Quakerism, which not

only lent a pacifist outlook but has also proven to be compatible with a scientific worldview. “We don’t believe in creeds,” he said. “We believe in actions.”

Prof. Ellis plans to support a number of projects in South Africa with his prize money. These include campaigns to improve education for black youths and to try to implement a guaranteed financial grant to all South Africans as a way to help eliminate poverty.

ENI

The Difference Makers Conference 2004

Lakeshore St. Andrew's Church

The leadership of your congregation is warmly invited to an exciting conference around the theme,

“What Makes A Leader?”

This year’s conference will feature a number of new workshop options in addition to the 3 plenary sessions.

Fri. Oct. 29 – Sat. Oct. 30, 2004

Registration is limited

Cost of \$75 per registrant includes two meals and all materials

(After October 8th registration is \$90)

For Conference brochures please contact us at:

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235 Amy Croft Dr., Tecumseh, ON N9K 1C8

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**3:00 pm at the Air Canada Centre,
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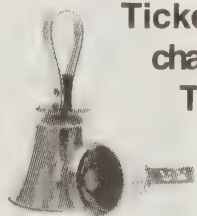
Tickets - \$25.50 (plus service charges) Available from

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or www.ticketmaster.ca

For more information, phone 905-686-5676 or e-mail

ogehr@come.to. The 11th International Handbell Symposium is organized by the Ontario Guild of English Handbell Ringers (OGEHR), on-line at <http://come.to/ogehr>.



Welcoming refugees brings us closer to God

Newcomers to Canada enrich a Manitoba congregation

by Tom Denton

Abdullah is unmistakable in the men's row of our choir. Tall, erect, black — striking in the manner of so many refugees from South Sudan. He has been contributing his tenor voice for more than a year, and we are grateful.

Out in the congregation, there are now four more people from a Sudanese refugee background who are regular worshippers. Abdullah is responsible for bringing them into fellowship with us. If our other members had been as diligent over the past few months, we would be bursting at the seams and holding extra services.

Abdullah, 32, was sponsored to come to Canada by our church, jointly with the federal government, in what is known as a Joint Assistance Sponsorship. JAS comes under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program by which the federal government puts up the money necessary for financial support and the church community provides the social support necessary for successful settlement and integration.

JAS cases are those that present special settlement challenges. Often they are single moms with small children, but a host of reasons can cause Canada's officers overseas to select refugees for this joint form of sponsorship. In Abdullah's case, his special difficulty was illiteracy in his own language, the tongue of the Shuluk people, and his lack of progress in learning in his country of asylum, Ethiopia. And he spoke no English.

Our church has been sponsoring refugees for many years. Most are the family-linked type where local relatives of the refugee agree to provide the financial



Photo by Callie Long ACT International

People displaced by war in Liberia were supported by PWS&D through Action by Churches Together.



www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd



Living OUR
Faith

2003-2004

ANNUAL REPORT



Presbyterian World Service & Development

This is an abridged version of PWS&D's report in the Acts of Proceedings of the 180th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

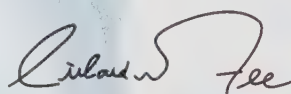
DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Victims, Survivors and the Ministry of All Believers

Sharing, helping and reaching out to others has been part and parcel of the church of Jesus Christ since the apostles first gathered in Jerusalem and then spread throughout the known world. The Good News has always been through "word" and through "deed". Collections were taken and sent to those in need as recorded in I Corinthians 16:1-4 and Romans 15:23-29.

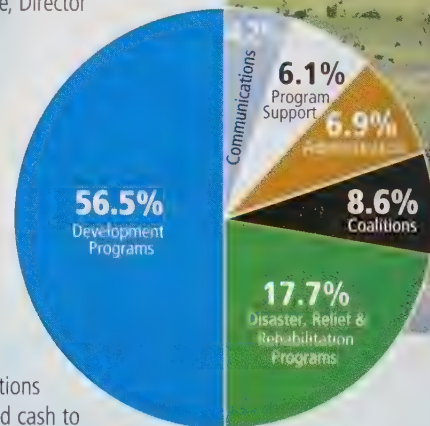
Within The Presbyterian Church in Canada, this biblically based expression of love, concern and interest in others is taken seriously and is very much a part of the fabric of our church. In our church, emergency relief, community development, and refugee sponsorship is undertaken by Presbyterian World Service & Development.

PWS&D reaches out to people in situations of desperation and crisis in the name of Jesus Christ. Recognizing their determination to live, as well as their hopes and dreams for their families and communities, we work with them to fulfil those aspirations. In a world where military spending is 79 times greater than humanitarian aid, PWS&D helps Canadian Presbyterians offer an alternative vision: one where everyone has the opportunity to live life as God intended.



Richard Fee, Director

**How
was the
money
spent?**



PWS&D also responds to hunger through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In 2003 congregations and individuals donated \$463,200 in grain and cash to PWS&D's CFGB account. With contributions from other CFGB members and matching grants from CIDA, PWS&D was the lead agency for programs worth \$6,944,440 in North Korea, Malawi, Ukraine, Nicaragua, and Tanzania. PWS&D also contributed to other CFGB members for programs in Liberia and Ethiopia.

Living Our Faith

"Some 80 million people are struggling to survive the painful consequences of conflicts and natural disasters. They are victims and survivors, sometimes of several crises at once: war, drought, poverty, and HIV/AIDS... Behind the statistics are ordinary people, each with their lives, hopes and dreams. They are people living in extraordinary situations.... People struggling to survive against overwhelming odds rarely want our pity. Instead they need our practical support to help them to respond, recover and get their normal lives back.

In 2003, humanitarian assistance contributions fell well below requirements to fund projects and meet identified needs. . . Humanitarian funding requests are large in absolute terms, but pale in comparison to other global expenditure patterns. Currently, the world spends some US\$10 billion on humanitarian aid, compared to US\$794 billion on the military."

The United Nations Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal for 2004

Statement of Revenue and Expenditures For the year ended December 31, 2003

	2003	2002
Revenues	\$	\$
Undesignated contributions	1,226,358	1,287,264
Designated contributions – emergency relief	365,255	357,309
Designated contributions – projects	578,728	493,109
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	398,000	398,000
Government of the Province of Saskatchewan	7,537	8,116
Other income	27,512	24,890
Total	2,603,390	2,568,688
Expenditures		
Disaster, Relief and Rehabilitation	443,655	607,780
CIDA/PWS&D Overseas Program	537,922	509,934
Presbyterian constituency funded projects	876,861	927,060
Memberships, partnerships and coalitions	216,180	287,150
Resource, communications, promotion, grants	104,974	120,438
Program support	153,662	144,819
Administration	172,004	156,466
Total	2,505,258	2,753,647

While donations to PWS&D are over and above contributions to **Presbyterians Sharing**. . . these two arms of the Church work closely together. PWS&D funds overseas partners' relief and development programs. Funds from **Presbyterians Sharing**. . . support PCC mission personnel seconded to overseas partners.

Cover photos by Hege Opseth, ACT

*The following pages highlight the impact of PWS&D work in 2003-2004. PWS&D programs in disaster response, primary health care, basic education, skills training, micro-enterprise, food security, human rights and democracy are planned and implemented by strong and active churches and relief and development organizations. Memberships in **Action by Churches Together (ACT)** and the **Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB)** enable PWS&D to respond to emergencies almost anywhere in the world.*

Iran

On December 26, 2003 a 6.3 magnitude earthquake in Bam killed 30,000 people, injured 30,000 more and left 100,000 homeless. PWS&D sent \$25,000 to ACT to help provide shelter, offer trauma counseling and rebuild the economy.

Iraq

After the war PWS&D helped rebuild water supplies and provide food, shelter, soap, towels, toiletries, blankets and quilts to refugees and internally displaced people through ACT, CFGB and Manara Ministries of Jordan.

Liberia

PWS&D helped provide relief to people displaced and traumatized by Liberia's civil war through ACT and CFGB. Final peace agreements were signed in August 2003, but displacement, post-war trauma, high unemployment, malaria, diarrhoea and malnutrition continued to plague the country. In addition to food and shelter, counseling programs helped people recover from the trauma of fighting, family separations and sexual abuse.

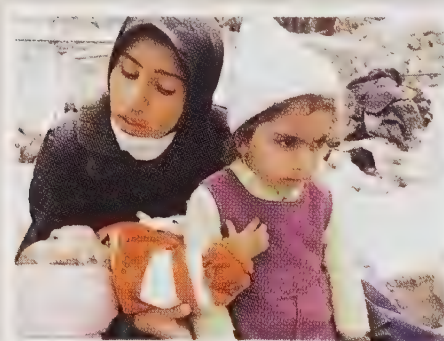
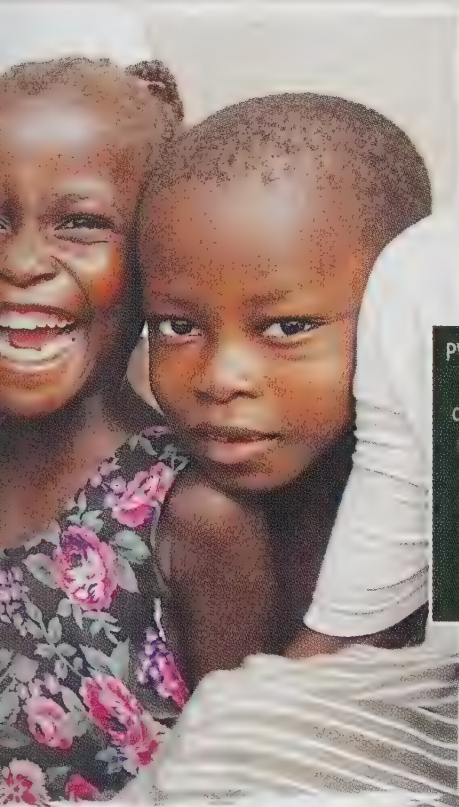


Photo Credit: Hege Opseth, ACT





Mozambique

PWS&D supported water, health and savings and credit projects through Cooperation Canada Mozambique (COCAMO) in Nampula.

PWS&D always works to maximize your donations by accessing matching grants from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) whenever possible.

Photo Credit: Aasbjorn Skaaland, ACT

Nigeria

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) launched a three-year program to train people in four synods on HIV/AIDS education and counseling. It is hoped that at least 150,000 church members will be reached through this project. PWS&D also helped the PCN train over 200 women and community leaders in basic human rights and encourage voting and civil involvement.

MOZAMBIQUE



NIGERIA

Nicaragua

PWS&D helped our partner CIVEMN offer loans to help inhabitants of Nueva Vida, a community that emerged out of the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, begin small businesses. Training programs in poor neighborhoods helped youth develop new job skills. Use of soybeans improved nutrition.

Another partner, Soynica, and PWS&D supported educators who promoted breast feeding and general health and nutrition in 26 barrios of Managua and one barrio of Ciudad Sandino.

Through our CFGB membership we also started food security projects in 36 rural communities.

PWS&D began a three-year project in Boaco

NICARAGUA



with ACJ (YMCA Nicaragua) helping families protect water sources, plant trees, and use appropriate technology for pasture and perishable crops. Over the next three years they plan to provide cows to families for milk and meat. Offspring will be passed to new families, and in three years over 140 families should benefit.

PWS&D also helped our partner INPRHU get children off the street and back into school and promoted the protection of children's rights to build strong communities.

Tanzania

PWS&D and the Africa Inland Church of Tanzania (AICT) responded to two disasters. Fifty earthquake resistant houses were built for people affected by the Bariadi earthquake. Beans and corn, with sorghum and maize seed, were provided to farmers in seven villages severely affected by drought in the Lake District.

As a response to chronic food shortages around Shinyanga, PWS&D helped AICT provide drought resistant sorghum seed, set up a community seed bank, construct shallow wells, and train farmers in sustainable agriculture. In 2003, farmers placed more than 1.5 mt of sorghum and

maize seed in storage to protect against future crop failures. A revolving "tool bank" sold ploughs, wheelbarrows and other farming inputs at subsidized prices to 600 farmers.

Dominican Republic

Sonrisas carried out community health awareness through computer training. Topics included oral health and

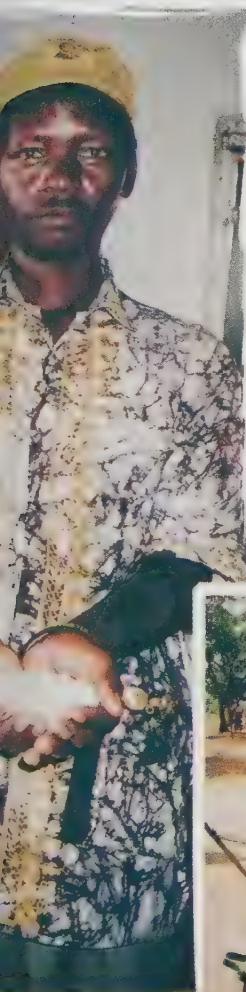
hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and first aid.

CONGO



Photo Credit: Thomas van Kampen, ACT

In 2003 and 2004 PWS&D also supported emergencies in the Palestinian Territories, Congo, Cuba, Afghanistan, India, Mauritius and Colombia.



TANZANIA



Malawi

Food security, HIV/AIDS and high unemployment continued to challenge development in Malawi. In northern Malawi, Livingstonia Synod distributed over 2,000 mt of corn to feed people in ten districts. Seed and agricultural programs helped farmers improve nutrition by diversifying crops and



increasing yields. PWS&D also helped the Synod promote water sanitation and construct boreholes and shallow wells.

In southern Malawi, Blantyre Synod provided education, food, and income generating programs for orphan families. Volunteers were trained in home-based care, advocacy and HIV/AIDS prevention to support families living with AIDS. Community based orphan care centers provided a safe place for pre-school children to grow and learn during the day. The Synod also promoted voting and civic involvement to prepare for the 2004 elections, and helped communities advocate for a "Right to Food" bill to make it law for the government to respond to issues of poverty and food security.

Kenya

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa provided exceptionally progressive training to help lay leaders and pastors educate their parishes about HIV/AIDS.

At the Shauri Yako Community Support Centre daily meals were provided for 60

In 2003, PWS&D received \$200,012 in bequests from individuals who helped share Christ's love around the world by naming PWS&D as a beneficiary in their estate.

KENYA





Woman planting photo credit:
Rainer Lang, ACT

children. Mentoring and counseling programs helped high-risk youth deal with social issues and learn about HIV/AIDS. Young people were challenged to care for the environment by composting, gardening and cleaning up the local river. Soccer tournaments and programs in arts and crafts helped youth channel energy.



MALAWI



KENYA

GHANA



Ghana

In 2003 close to 200 people developed small businesses and agriculture projects with credit through the People's Participation Program. The Garu Community-Based Rehabilitation program supported physically or mentally challenged persons with vocational training, education and by advocating for their rights. Both are programs of The Presbyterian Church of Ghana.



Guatemala

PWS&D supported literacy, basic education, civic and legal education, health, and income generation programs with the Fraternidad de Presbyteriales Mayas (FPM). The FPM trained midwives to accompany pregnant women, help deliver babies and offer post-natal mother and child care in remote areas. They helped 242 women learn how to make small businesses profitable and established revolving funds to enable the poor to access credit to start small businesses.

In the past two years the Centre for Integrated Studies and Community Development (CEIDEC) worked with communities to introduce hydroponics to grow vegetables and installed four community corn mills, a sewing workshop with eight manual sewing machines, and a community poultry farm. A pilot project in Izabal introduced bamboo houses. 27 communities are now working together to get titles to their land. Women associations are becoming stronger by linking up with similar groups in other regions.



EL SALVADOR



El Salvador

The Women's Research and Training Institute (IMU) helped women learn from one another and work together to decrease domestic violence and persuade local governments to support just and equitable development. IMU also supported micro-enterprise programs to help families generate an income. Health promoters and medical brigades promoted preventative health and hygiene practices in remote communities, and a community pharmacy made essential drugs accessible to people at low cost.

Canadian congregations also helped construct nine houses with Dios Compasivo Baptist Church, continuing earthquake rehabilitation efforts begun in 2001.



North Korea

While favourable weather conditions and improved availability of fertilizer, electricity for irrigation, fuel and spare parts for tractors improved agriculture in North Korea, domestic production was still too low to feed everyone. PWS&D, as lead agency for CFGB, shipped wheat flour worth \$1.4 million to feed 833,000 recipients in September 2003, and wheat worth \$3.6 million in March 2004.

Both programs, monitored from port to beneficiary by the United Nation's World Food Program, provided food for children and pregnant and nursing women.



NORTH KOREA

GUATEMALA



North Korean nurse holding baby photo credit: Callie Long, ACT

India

The Church of North India continued to improve health in central India. In 2003 114 village health workers made over 3000 visits to pregnant women, safely delivered over 400 babies, and made over 2000 postnatal visits. 1500 children were immunized. The workers conducted thousands of health seminars and treated fevers, colds, diarrhoea, night blindness, scabies, measles, cuts, and malnutrition; referring over 1000 cases to hospitals and clinics. Home gardens improved diets for more than 1000 families. In Barwani and Ratlam 37 new self-help groups save on a regular basis and make credit available at reasonable rates for income generating initiatives. A HIV/AIDS project with the Banchhara worked to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, care for the affected and help HIV+ people develop new sources of income.

In February 2004, communities in the Bhil region became the target of anti-Christian movements. Churches and houses were burned and Christian leaders imprisoned. PWS&D is coordinating an appeal to help pay legal expenses, rebuild homes, restore church property, and protect health and education ministries.

In the state of Tamil Nadu PWS&D supported literacy, vocational training, health, and income generation programs with the Institute for

Development Education, Roofs for the Roofless and Madurai Non-Formal Education Centre to help people work against poverty in their communities.



Refugees

2004 marks the 25th anniversary of the Canadian Government's Private Sponsorship Program, which has helped resettle 185,000 refugees since 1979. In 2003, The PCC approved 48 refugee sponsorship cases. If all cases are successful, 69 refugees originating from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan will resettle in Canada.

INDIA



A REFUGEE CAMP IN AFGHANISTAN

The PWS&D Committee meets twice a year to review and plan PWS&D relief and development programs, communications strategies and refugee ministries.

Kairos

PWS&D worked ecumenically through Kairos on advocacy programs concerning debt cancellation, international financial reform, ecologically sustainable economic development, just-trade practices, conflict resolution, peace-building and protection of human rights. Focus countries were Sudan, Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, India, Palestinian Territories and Iraq. CIDA also contributed \$1,546,215 to this program.

Canada

Freezing following a flash flood destroyed homes and businesses in Badger, Newfoundland. Upon the request of churches in Newfoundland, PWS&D issued an appeal and made an initial donation of \$5,000 to help the Red Cross with relief efforts. As donations came in from across Canada, PWS&D was able to present an additional \$53,539.

Major forest fires in British Columbia displaced thousands of residents and destroyed hundreds of homes. PWS&D sent \$25,000 to

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES



Photo Credit: Paul Jeffrey, ACT



INDIA

Photo Credit: UELCI, ACT

CANADA



the Red Cross for basic needs not met by insurance or other agencies.

RIGHT: A cheque for Badger was presented to the Red Cross during the 2003 Easter Sunday Service at St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Grand Falls-Windsor, Nfld.

Getting Involved

PWS&D programs do not happen without the support of individuals and congregations. Every year congregations get involved through emergency appeals, special projects, educational workshops and worship services. Our partners continually express thanks for remembering their work in prayer.

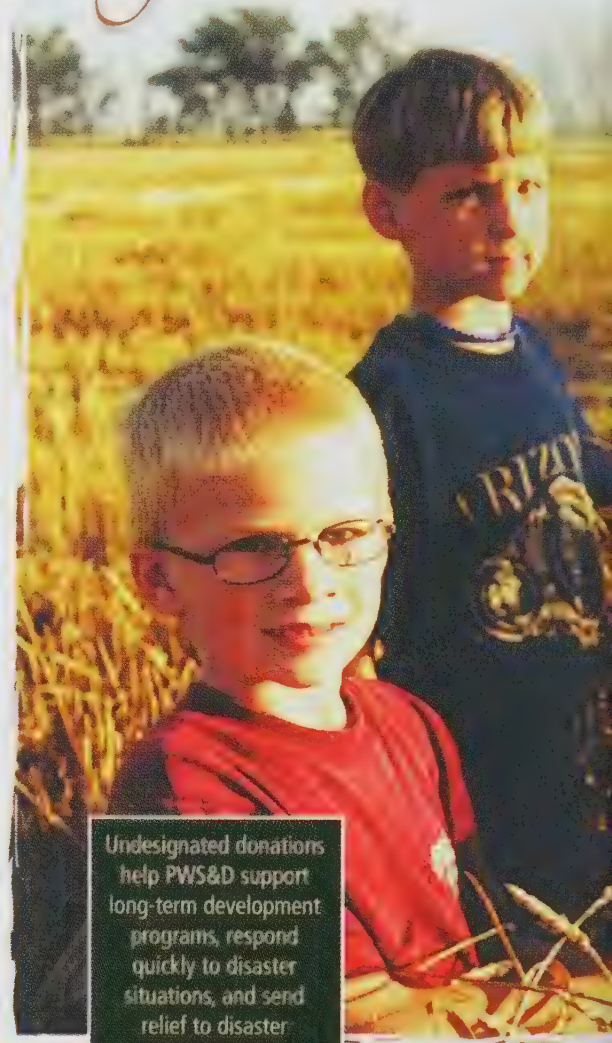
Canadian Foodgrains Bank growing projects helped provide food resources that PWS&D can use in disaster situations.

PWS&D staff & committee members continued to engage congregations by **speaking** on Sundays and at special events.

PWS&D helps congregations integrate relief and development work into their worship services with **Advent and Lent Liturgies** and resources for **PWS&D Sunday**, the first Sunday in February.

Exposure Tour Grants helped individuals and congregations learn first-hand about mission overseas. Recipients raise awareness about the work of PWS&D when they return.

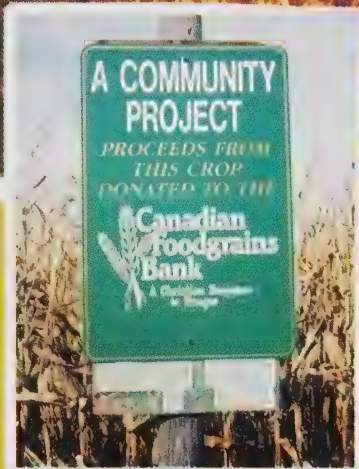
Matching grants from PWS&D helped congregations support partners outside the main sphere of PWS&D's work through the **Congregational Initiatives Program**. In 2003 we helped develop a library and support AIDS programs in Uganda, expand two schools in Nicaragua, purchase a camp for children in Romania, acquire a tractor for a school in Ukraine, support grandparents caring for orphans and provide training for women in Zimbabwe, purchase a braille printer for a co-op in El Salvador, support health care in rural Myanmar and dig a well in



Undesignated donations help PWS&D support long-term development programs, respond quickly to disaster situations, and send relief to disaster areas that do not attract large funds.



A fundraising concert at Geneva Presbyterian Church was one of the many creative ways that congregations raised funds for PWS&D and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.



India. Each congregation developed the partnership and monitored the work.

PWS&D supports the work and campaigns of **TransFair Canada** and the **Maquila Solidarity Network** as practical ways to encourage sustainable development through fair trade.



Photo Credit: Paul Jeffrey, ACT

Living Our Faith

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith."

JAMES 2:14-18

For more information contact:



**Presbyterian World
Service & Development**

50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7 • Phone: 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301
Fax: 416-441-2825 • pwsd@presbyterian.ca • www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd

All photos courtesy of PWS&D partners, staff and volunteers unless otherwise noted.

and social supports if the church will undertake the legal obligation to the Government of Canada. Like about 90 other agencies, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has an agreement with Ottawa that entitles its congregations to perform this humanitarian work.

Abdullah is only our second JAS case, and he was brought to our attention by an employee in the local Citizenship and Immigration Canada office who was familiar with our many refugee sponsorships. What caught her attention and ours was that Abdullah is Presbyterian.

We have since learned there are many Presbyterians in Africa, and many of these have been forced to flee their homes as refugees. We knew, of course, of the Canadian Presbyterian Church's special bonds with Malawi in East Africa, but we were not aware of the Presbyterian presence in the francophone countries of West Africa, or in the continent's heartland, as in South Sudan. We have since had worshippers among us from Chad, Cameroon, Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. They have increased our numbers and enriched our Christian fellowship.

We highly recommend to other Canadian Presbyterian churches that they consider the Private Refugee Sponsorship Program. Because of their lack of financial commitment, JAS cases are a good way to start. Presbyterian World Service and Development administers the program, and Colleen McCue is the contact person responsible. She will be delighted to help.

Few of the scores of people we have sponsored have ended up worshipping with us. They have had their own faith connections. Indeed, many have been Muslims. But we know we are doing God's work and have had the great satisfaction of seeing people rescued and restarted in a new, safe and fulfilling life.

Abdullah is doing well. His schooling has progressed remarkably. So has his English. And he is a thoroughly delightful person. He, and we, are now awaiting the arrival of his wife and son from whom he has been separated for many years. His presence among us is a special blessing. **R**

Tom Denton is an elder in First Church, Winnipeg.

Opening doors to others — and for ourselves

Have you heard the knocking at the door? Every week, people knock at the door of the Presbyterian Church. Some are refugees. A refugee, as defined by the United Nations Convention on Refugees, is a person who must leave his or her country and is unable or afraid to return to that country due to "well-founded fear of persecu-

tion for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion." When we do not open the door with offers of help, people remain trapped. Most face a high probability of persecution, torture, death or — at best — stagnation for years in a refugee camp, waiting to get on with their lives.

The Presbyterian Church supports and assists people in overseas refugee camps until they can return home. We also help some who can never go home to resettle in Canada. Helping refugees is not simply a responsibility or a duty. When a refugee knocks and we open the door, the door also opens for us. We receive an opportunity to live more faithfully and in closer relationship with God.

World Refugee Day

The United Nations designates June 20 every year as World Refugee Day. This year's theme, A Place to Call Home: Rebuilding Lives in Safety and Dignity, seeks to help people examine the challenges and hopes refugees have as they search for a home. Check the UNHCR website www.unhcr.ch for stories on refugees rebuilding their lives. PWS&D encourages congregations to remember refugees in their worship on or around June 20.

Overseas assistance

Presbyterian World Service and Development supports people in refugee camps by providing food, shelter, education and income-generating opportunities. While these camps are meant to be temporary, some have existed for decades. Generations of people have grown up in "temporary" refugee camps. When situations stabilize, PWS&D partners assist refugees to return home by helping to rebuild houses, dig wells and provide seeds and tools for replanting crops. PWS&D also helps returnees rebuild their lives in their home countries with income-generating programs. You can make a donation to PWS&D to support programs that help refugees live with dignity in camps and resettle when they can return home.

Resettlement in Canada

The Presbyterian Church is an official Sponsorship Agreement Holder with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This allows Presbyterian congregations to sponsor refugees. Most sponsorship cases authorized by the Presbyterian Church are private sponsorships; however, on occasion, a church will undertake a Joint Assistance Sponsorship.

Private sponsorship: This type of refugee sponsorship is fully funded by sponsoring congregations. Congregations commit to providing basic financial and logistical support for the sponsored refugee for at least 12 months. Local relatives of the refugee may help the congregation provide financial and social supports.

Joint Assistance Sponsorship: With this type of sponsorship, the federal government provides the financial support while the congregation provides the logistical and moral support to ensure that the refugee can integrate into Canadian life.

For more information on how to get involved:

Visit the PWS&D website at www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/refugees or contact Presbyterian World Service and Development's refugee program coordinator: Colleen McCue, cmccue@presbyterian.ca, 1-800-619-7301, ext. 252.



Afghan youth gathered in front of a refugee camp in Pakistan. PWS&D helped supply water for the camp through Action by Churches Together.

Colleen McCue is PWS&D program coordinator for refugees, finance and administration.

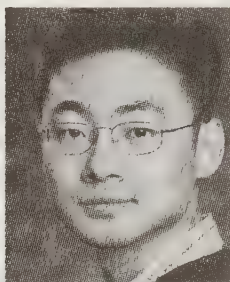
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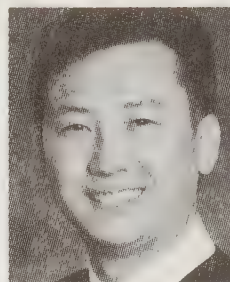
(* denotes degree only)



**Teresa Annette
Charlton, BA**
Home congregation:
St. Andrew's,
Stirling, Ont.



Jae-Hoon Cho, B.Sc.
(Hons.)
Home congregation:
Pilgrim Korean, Toronto



Soo Jin Chung, B.Eng.
Home congregation:
St. Timothy,
Etobicoke, Ont.



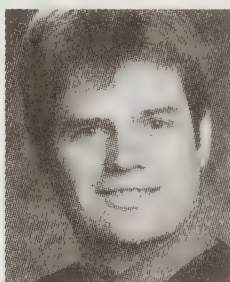
Angela Joyce Cluney,
BA
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West River,
Durham, N.S.



**Jennifer Ruth Amelia
Donnelly, BA**
Home congregation:
St. Andrew's,
Picton, Ont.



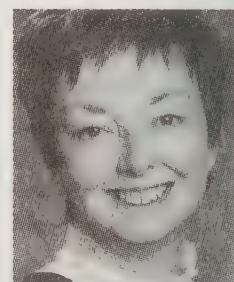
**Laura Victoria
Hargrove, B.H.Ec.**
Home congregation:
Armour Heights,
Toronto



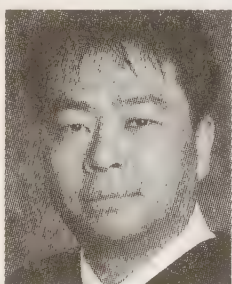
David Sean Howard,
BA, B.Ed.
Home congregation:
Knox (Spadina),
Toronto

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available)

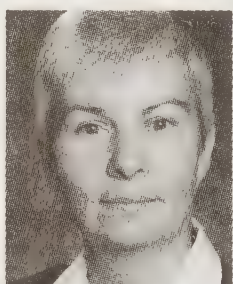
Joseph Hwang, BA
Home congregation:
Vaughan Community,
Thornhill, Ont.



Linda Larmour*, BA,
B.Th.
Home congregation:
Knox (Spadina),
Toronto



Kevin Kyu-In Lee, B.Sc.
Home congregation:
Knox, Agincourt, Ont.



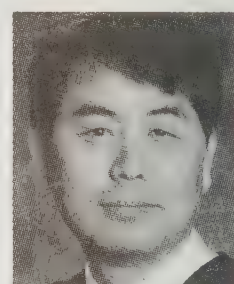
**Jean Katherine
MacAulay, BA**
Home congregation:
Knox, Baddeck, N.S.



Michael Maroney, BFA
Home congregation:
St. Andrew's,
Dresden, Ont.



**Rylan B.T.
Montgomery, B.Sc.**
Home congregation:
Knox (Spadina),
Toronto



Kwang-Yil Pak*, BA
Home congregation:
Toronto Korean



**Bernard Norman
Skelding, B.Sc.Kin.,
BScPT**
Home congregation:
Cheyne,
Stoney Creek, Ont.



**Wayne John Wardell*,
BA, B.Th., MA**
Home congregation:
St. Stephen's, Toronto

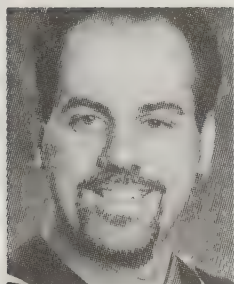


**Myong-hi Yoo, B.Sc.,
MTS**
Home congregation:
Toronto Korean

Master of Religious Education

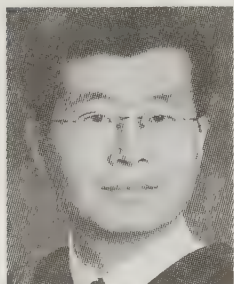
Angela Joyce Cluney, BA
Home congregation:
West River, Durham, N.S.

Master of Theological Studies



Derrick Garnet Cunningham, B.Math., B.Ed.
Home congregation: St. Andrew's, Cobourg, Ont.

Doctor of Theology

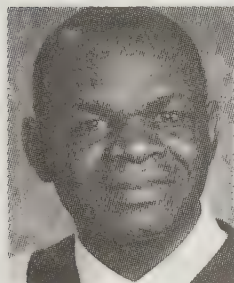


Seung-Gi Choi, BS, M.Div., ThM, Dip.Sp.Dir.
Home congregation: Vaughan Community, Thornhill, Ont.

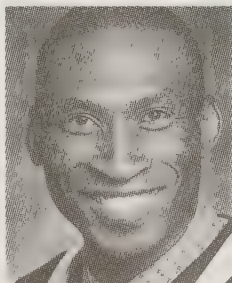


Paul Donald McLean, B.Math., M.Div., ThM
Home congregation: Toronto Formosan, and Knox (Spadina), Toronto

Master of Theology



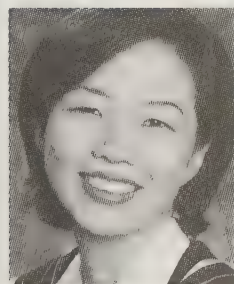
Patrick Elwin M'banga, BA, Dip.Th.
Home congregation: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Malawi



Augustus O.E. Oku, BA, Dip.Th.
Home congregation: Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Ibiaku Parish



Timothy Robert Purvis, BA (Hons.), M.Div.
Home congregation: Jubilee, Stayner, and Zion, Sunnidale Corners, Ont.



Mi-Weon Yang, BA, M.Div.
Home congregation: East Faith Korean



James Aitken Young, M.Div.
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PhD, University of St. Michael's College

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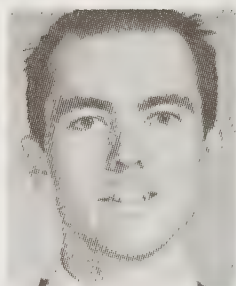
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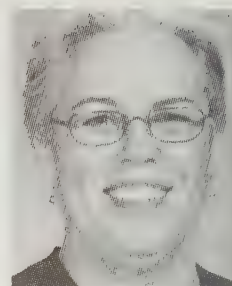
Timothy Bruneau,
BA, B.Th.
Home congregation:
Calvin, North Bay, Ont.



Reid Chudley, BA, B.Th.
Home congregation:
Knox, Victoria



Mary Anne Grant,
B.H.Ec., B.Ed., M.Ed.
Home congregation:
Hardwood Lands, N.S.



Linda Pasmore,
BA
Home congregation:
St. Andrew's,
Whitby, Ont.

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Yeon-Ho Jung,
B.Th., MA
Home congregation:
Chambit, Montreal

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Richard Cleaver, B.Th.
Home congregation:
Paris Church, Paris, Ont.



Henry Huberts,
BRE, M.Div.
Home congregation:
Paris Church, Paris, Ont.



Paul Sakasov,
B.Sc.(Hons), M.Div.
Home congregation:
St. Andrew's,
Wingham, Ont.

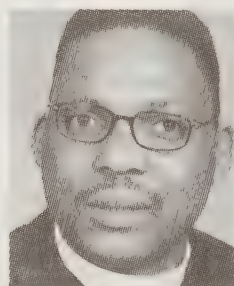
Diploma in Ministry



Huda Kandalaft,
BA, MACE
Home congregation:
St. Andrew and St. Paul,
Montreal



Gwendolyn Roberts,
BRE, M.Div.
Home congregation:
Calvin, Halifax.



**Charles Mutamba
Kahumbu,** Dip.Th.
Home congregation:
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BA
Home congregation:
Surrey Korean,
Surrey, B.C.



David Youngsun Kim,
B.Eng., M.Eng., MA
Home congregation:
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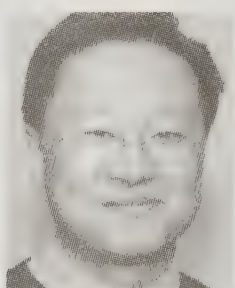


Ok Lan Yoon, BA
Home congregation:
Central, Vancouver

Master of Divinity



Justin Kyoung-Wung Kim, BA
Home congregation:
Abbotsford Church,
Abbotsford, B.C.



Byung Yun James Ko,
BRE
Home congregation:
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Home congregation:
Central, Vancouver

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Cynthia Jean Chenard,
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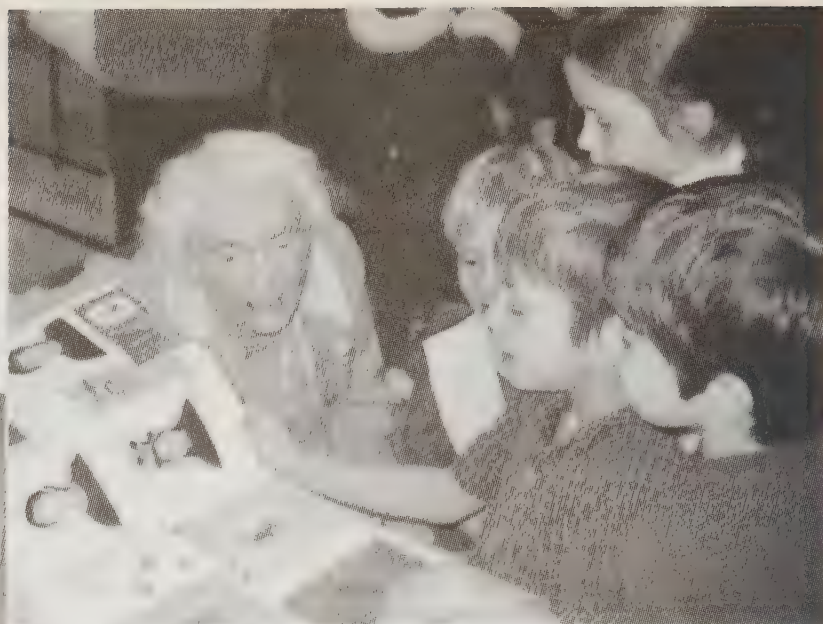
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people & places

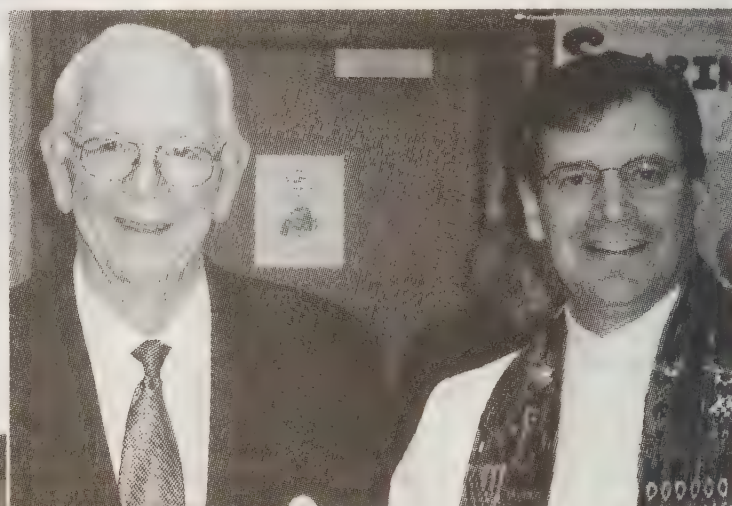
Peggy Brown was honoured at a reception at Glenview Church, Toronto, for her 60 years as a church school teacher — a record for the congregation. She is pictured with four of her pupils looking over a scrapbook composed of two pages from each church school class. ▶



◀ The congregation of St. James, Miramichi, N.B., held a special dinner to honour Ralph Glover for his 54 years of faithful service as an elder. He is shown receiving a personalized Bible from Rev. J. Gillis Smith.



Members of First Church, Port Colborne, Ont., enjoy working in the church's newly renovated kitchen. ▼



▲ William McKenzie Ross IV was honoured by the congregation and session of First Church, Chatham, Ont., on his retirement after 20 years of dedicated service as clerk of session. Pictured with Bill is Rev. Mike Maroney.



To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Photographs will not be returned. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

people & places

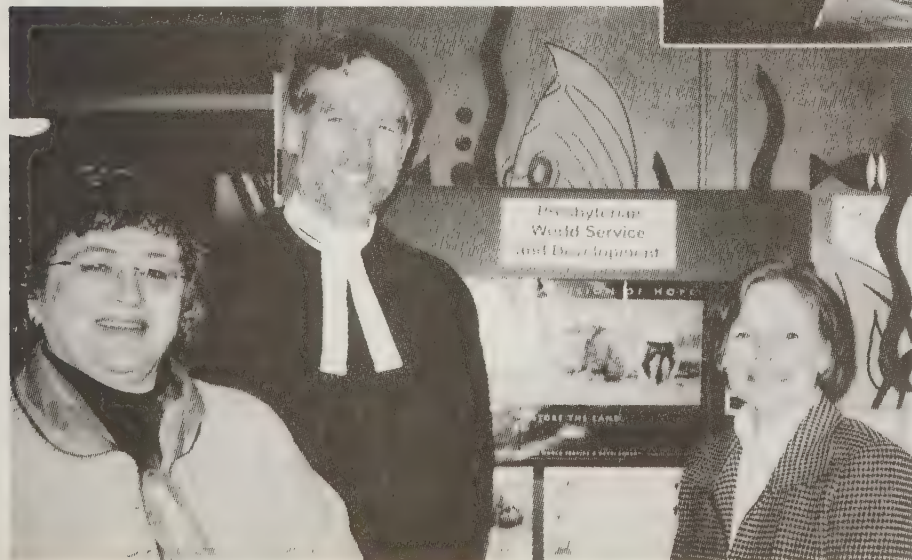
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First Church, Penetanguishene, Ont., entered the toboggan race and parade during the town's annual Winterama festival. The Ark won first prize for most attractive toboggan and second prize for best float. More than 30 volunteers worked many long hours constructing the Ark from cardboard, tape and glue—a requirement for all entries. Rev. Gerard Booy and elder Kevin Tigwell piloted the Ark, which was launched by Case deJong.



Members of the Ferguson/Grace AMS of Derby and Millerton, N.B., knit lap afghans as an outreach project in their community. Pictured trying one of the afghans is Edna Danby (seated) with (L-R) Ruth Bateman, Glenna Taylor and Margaret Clouston.

The congregation of Graceview, Etobicoke, Ont., said goodbye to founding member Bill Downie on his recent move to Barrie, Ont. Bill was an elder, choir member and Sunday school teacher in the former Grace congregation for more than 47 years. A presentation was made by Alex Henderson (right) on behalf of the congregation.



A Celebration of Mission was held on the last weekend of March at St. Andrew's, Kitchener, Ont., as part of the congregation's 150th anniversary celebrations. The weekend focused on the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development. Rev. Andrew Johnston, minister of St. Andrew's, Ottawa, and convener of the PWS&D committee, spoke on the work of the agency at a Caribbean dinner on Saturday evening. Debbie and Mike Burns of Knox, Waterloo, Ont., also spoke about their recent visit to Malawi. Mr. Johnston, who was guest speaker at the 9:30 and 11 a.m. Sunday services, was joined between services by Renee Biuvenga-Hyams, chair of the congregation's national/international committee (left), and Karen Redman, MP, an elder at St. Andrew's.

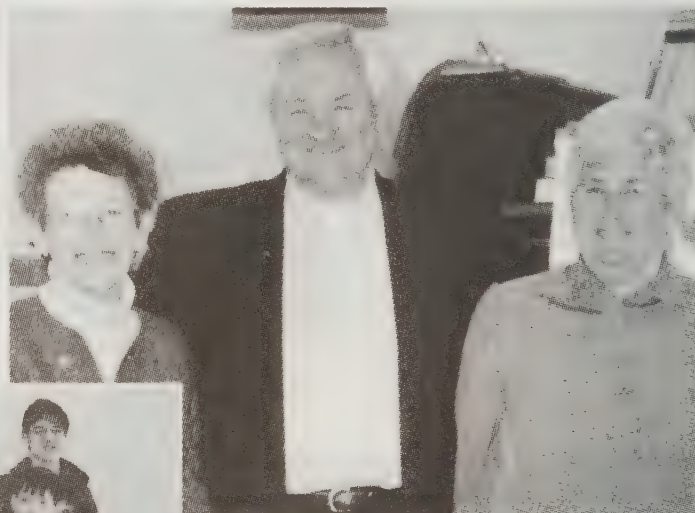
Phoebe Gowdy, a long-time member and an elder of St. Timothy's, Ottawa, was recently recognized for her work in the community with the presentation of the Community Builder Award from the Ottawa United Way. The award was presented to her in the presence of the congregation by Stephanie Beaumont, co-chair of volunteer recognition (left), who cited Phoebe's involvement with Meals on Wheels, the Heron Emergency Food Centre (co-chair of the board and food buyer), Chapter J of the P.E.O. Sisterhood (president) and several church committees.



Members of the church school of St. Andrew's, Sackville, N.B., gather around a model of a Bhil village in India they built for the show-and-tell part of their Lenten project. The project focuses on immunizing Bhil children and establishing village gardens for families. Leaves on a plant wall chart are coloured as money comes in — \$2 for a "shot" and \$1 for a plant. For the adults of the church, a figure of a village health worker is placed on their chart for every \$175 they raise. Because of the current church study, *Partners: Meeting Bhil Friends in Central India*, the church school is continuing with its project. Pictured with teacher Julianne Steeves (left) are Steven McCluskey, Bruce Mills, Nicholas Jarche, Adelia Varner and Nell Varner.



The church school of St. David's, St. John's, collected pennies in its penny church bank to purchase supplies for the Francisco Coll School, located next to the Guatemala City dump. A group from St. David's travelled to Guatemala City in March to present the school supplies.



The congregation of St. Andrew's Beeton, Ont., held a presentation for Marie Logan (right), who retired after 33 years as a member of session, including 10 as clerk. Shown with Marie are elder Hazel Johanssen, who presented her with a gold cross and chain, and Rev. Jim Young, interim moderator.



A matter of life and debt

If thy credit cards outspend thee, cut them up

Some time ago, my wife and I sat down at the dining room table to figure out how we were doing financially. Our net was looking pretty gross, so I said, "You know, the bank will lend us enough money to get us completely out of debt." Then I realized what I'd said. It's amazing how smart some of us are. Until we start talking about finances. If you are about to back your bank-financed car out of your bank-owned garage to drive with credit card gas to open a charge account in order to fill your mortgaged home with furniture because a sign promises "No payments until February," please accept the following advice.

First of all, list your assets. "Liquid" assets are measured by how much you have invested in milk, orange juice and root beer. "Solid" assets are the ones that will outlive the expiry date on your milk carton. For us, this includes a small dog

we paid \$300 for, or roughly \$100 per brain cell. Seriously, here are six commandments for debt-free living.

1. If thy credit cards outspend thee, cut them off. The credit card was invented by Jacob back in Genesis 25 when he allowed his brother Esau to order a meal on credit. We've been paying dearly ever since. Today, 70 per cent of Canadian cardholders carry \$5,000 to \$6,000 in unpaid balances. The interest rates are often more than 20 per cent. So never buy with credit what you wouldn't buy with cash. Pay your credit cards off each month. If you can't, cut them up and clip them to the forks of your child's bicycle and see how much noise they'll make.

2. Buy a lottery ticket every 250,000 years. Years ago, our government initiated a special tax for people who are bad at math. It is called the lottery. Experts claim that, if you purchase one lottery ticket a week, you have a decent chance of winning the jackpot once every 250,000 years. Remember Proverbs 28:20: "The person who wants to get rich quick will only get into trouble."

3. Earn more than you spend. When our children were old enough to appreciate what money could do, we showed them how to put their small allowance in envelopes labelled For God, For the Future and For Me. If there was more month than money, they learned a valuable lesson: ask your dad for more.

4. Give stuff away. The reason we find giving tough is because we fear the future. Will God really provide for us? If we

truly believe God is our great provider, we will hold the stuff of Earth loosely, helping those in need. I wish I could convince Martha Stewart and Jerry Seinfeld of this. Martha owns 16 televisions. Jerry has 60 cars.

5. Remember "new" is not always "improved." During the average span of your working career, you can save more than \$150,000 by buying three-year-old vehicles instead of new ones. Some love the peace of mind of driving a new car; I have found even greater peace knowing that no one in town is going to steal my 1976 Dodge Dart.

6. Put not your trust in retirement accounts. While Ramona and I have taken steps to plan and save for the future, we must remember there are no guaranteed investments here. God gave the Israelites manna, but instructed them not to hoard it, perhaps because he knew their need to trust him daily. Too often our investments become a safety net in case God was kidding when he promised to supply all our needs. So follow Jesus' advice and "store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20). In other words, invest in eternity. Support your local church and the organizations that are impacting people with the gospel.

Debt-free living liberates us from the baggage and expectations of a materialistic age, freeing our assets to be invested in the Kingdom and freeing our time to invest in those we love. And, sometimes, that may even include a dog with three brain cells. **R**

Phil Callaway is the best-selling author of a dozen books (his new novel is *Growing Up on the Edge of the World*) and editor of *Prairie Bible Institute's Servant* magazine. His website is www.philcallaway.com.



Planning for the future

The Presbytery of Montreal

by Tom Dickey

Ah, Montreal! Steeped in history and alive with cosmopolitan atmosphere. A multicultural city that blends its French accent with more than 80 other ethnic communities. A city filled with boutiques, bistros and *joie de vivre*. “Energizing, electrifying, amazing!” sings the Quebec government’s tourist website in describing Montreal.

And what about the Presbytery of Montreal, you ask. Let’s face it, “Energizing, electrifying and amazing” are not words you’re likely to find describing *any* presbytery. But the Presbytery of Montreal does share at least one characteristic with its namesake — it is ethnically and linguistically diverse.

Of course, it wasn’t always so. Throughout its history, the strength of the presbytery was in serving the anglophone Presbyterian community. Unfortunately, that community diminished greatly in numbers and influence during the late-20th-century anglophone exodus from Quebec. The result was predictable, even for non-gambling Presbyterians. Six churches have been closed or sold within the past seven years. The fact Quebec has one of the lowest percentages of people attending church in the country (too much *joie de vivre*?) has no doubt aggravated the problem. It’s worth mentioning, however, that the contribution of early Scots immigrants to the area has not been entirely forgotten. Currently, an exhibit called *The Scots: Dyed-in-the-Wool Montrealers* is showing in the city’s McCord Museum. The exhibit earned what amounts to high praise from a university newspaper, the *McGill Tribune*: “McCord exhibition not all crap.”

The situation may have reached a head in October 2003 when the congregation of First Church, Verdun, a congregation



Last year, churches in the Chateauguay Valley in Quebec held a challenge to see who could purchase the most grain for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, with medals to be awarded to the top three purchasers. Presbyterian congregations won all three medals. Pictured are members of the winning church, Athelstan, which donated 18 tonnes of grain. Second prize went to St. Andrew’s, Huntingdon (12 tonnes), and third prize to Georgetown, Howick (7.5 tonnes).

that once had 1,200 members, asked the presbytery for permission to sell its church building. In a where-is-this-going-to-stop? moment, the presbytery decided to form a strategic planning group. In studying the presbytery’s history over the past 50 years and talking with congregations, the planning group came to realize that much of the church expansion that occurred in the 1950s and ’60s was more about accommodating the relocation of inner-city Presbyterians than it was about outreach. In an increasingly secular Quebec society, some congregations have now come to see themselves as places of religious retreat, providing a chaplaincy for aging Presbyterians. According to the

planning group’s convener, Rev. Dr. Clyde Irvine, many Presbyterians in Montreal are living in a “pleasant but essentially private world, culturally and theologically intimidated by the city [and] ill-equipped to think through and implement Christian mission.”

Ill-equipped, perhaps, but the presbytery hopes to compensate for declining resources with a “doing fewer projects better” approach. It is focusing its justice ministries on Action Réfugiés Montreal, an organization jointly supported by the Presbyterian and Anglican churches. For the past 10 years, ARM has worked with refugees from around the world who arrive in Montreal seeking a haven from



The musical group from Taiwanese Robert Campbell Church performs at a presbytery youth service, held six times a year.

persecution and torture. The organization advocates on the refugees' behalf, working to change laws that are often unfair and biased.

Yet the laws give and the laws take away. If the Presbytery of Montreal has suffered from provincial language laws and a declining economy, it has also gained from laws and dismal conditions that have driven refugees to their community. Congregations in the presbytery are worshipping not only in French and English, but also in Cantonese, Hungarian, Korean, Taiwanese, Tre (Ghanaian Church) and, since 2003, Mandarin in the Montreal Bible Church — the presbytery's newest mission.

The arrival of immigrants has also added some youthfulness to the presbytery's work with young people. Ten years ago, it was thought there were virtually no young people bounding within its bounds. But in March, more than 100 young people participated in a presbytery youth service — and that was without the Cantonese and Ghanaian youth groups. It was still a multicultural bunch, however: Taiwanese, Korean, South American, African and European. Anita Mack, regional staff for the presbyteries of Montreal and Quebec, credits the youth group from Taiwanese Robert Campbell Church (known in the presbytery as TRC) with being instrumental in getting the youth services, held six times a year, off the ground. Their musical group has been more or less established as the presbytery's house band.

Even with declining numbers, demo-

graphic shifts, church closings and amalgamations swirling around them, some congregations have continued to be a calm and visible presence in the community. There are the large, growing congregations such as the 600-plus-member Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (known as the A&P — they're fond of acronyms in the presbytery) in downtown Montreal, and Briarwood (known as Briarwood) in the western suburbs. There are the small, rural congregations in the Chateauguay Valley whose mission work characteristically includes contributions to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. In fact, last year, when churches in the valley held a challenge to see who could purchase the most grain for the CFGB, Presbyterian congregations took home the top three medals.

The presbytery's strategic planning group intends to give its report in September. There is a good chance its recommendations will include more church closings or amalgamations. But group convener Clyde Ervine also believes there will be recommendations proposing a reinvestment of current resources in a number of congregations and ministries that might flourish with greater financial stability.

"We do not for a moment believe that Presbyterian witness is finished here," says Dr. Ervine. "On the contrary, we are praying that God will help us discern a new future in which he is glorified in this city through the faithful, creative witness that one particular branch of Christ's church can yet give." **R**

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God meets us in the ebb and flow of community

'We ask not for what we want, but for what you know we need' — The Iona Abbey Worship Book

by Nancy L. Cocks

The colour of sea and sky here in Scotland can take your breath away. Waves break against some of the oldest rocks at the Earth's surface. Watch a star being born in the nebula of Orion's Belt, sparkling against the velvet night sky. If you dare step outside in a Force 9 gale some January morning, watch out for flying roof slates!

The Isle of Iona is often called "a thin place" — a place where the spiritual and material worlds touch. But what sort of spirituality honours both the beauty and ferocity of God's creation in a place where trees ache from bending into the wind and people must turn their hands to many things in order to feed a family?

The stone walls of Iona Abbey hold

part of the answer. The hand-cut stones have echoed God's praise for at least 800 years. The prayers of pilgrim and tourist alike continue to find a voice in public worship and private whisper. The arms of the abbey hold us when storms of one kind or other surround us. Week by week, bread and wine are shared; hands are laid on for the healing of body, mind and spirit; commitment to Christ's ministry for the renewing of the world is confessed. The heart of spirituality beats here in worship that can inspire and challenge when God's word moves with the same beauty and ferocity as the Hebridean landscape.

At the end of our morning service, we don't sit down;

we move directly into our daily work. The connection between worship and work is a founding commitment of the Iona Community. Come up the hill from the abbey with me to the MacLeod Centre where I work in the community's ministry of hospitality. Spirituality has a different energy here. It's a busy place. We welcome 50 guests each Saturday from mid-March through to the end of October. You'll meet everyone from toddlers to seniors, school groups, youth groups, church groups and folks on their own. We've welcomed l'Arche, asylum seekers and Christian-Buddhist dialogue groups in my time, as well as homeless people and community advocates, and families



Easter Day 2004 at Iona Abbey, a place that has echoed with the sounds of worship for at least 800 years.

on holiday. Not all in the same week, mind you, but we will be quite a mix whenever you come. Our staff, both residents like me and short-term volunteers, come from around the world. There may be a minister on sabbatical alongside students between terms, a teacher or lawyer taking time off, a recently retired couple wondering what comes next, and someone just out of jail looking for a new start. You'll meet us by our first names. You may not guess who's who until we sit down to eat together and start telling stories. Here, spirituality rolls up its sleeves and pitches in with the daily chores. On Iona, spirituality is called community.

Spirituality is a pilgrimage that requires us to attend to each other as we walk

In a community that changes week by week, worship and work draw us together. As much food for thought is shared chopping vegetables and doing dishes as is dished out in workshops on Celtic Christianity or the theme for the week. Guests draw close to each other's concerns as they share bedrooms as well as chats around the fire. Spirituality is not only a personal search for an encounter with God, it is a pilgrimage that requires us to attend to each other as we walk. In the laughter and tears we share, in song and Scottish dance, God's Spirit is at work. People open up to a power, a truth beyond themselves, in the unexpected gifts and challenge God offers us in each other. The Iona Community does not place any of us in the role of spiritual director or chaplain, believing instead that God will meet us in the ebb and flow of community. The prayer we say each Saturday morning sums it up:

O God, set your blessing on us as we begin this day together. Confirm us in the truth by which we rightly live; confront us with the truth from which we wrongly turn. We ask not for what we want, but for what you know we need, as we offer this day and ourselves for

you and to you through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

— *The Iona Abbey Worship Book*

I think of spirituality as the ways in which we live out our faith in God, the God whom we meet in Jesus Christ, led by the Holy Spirit. There isn't a secret recipe for spirituality that will nourish every soul. Yet, here on Iona, we meet many folk who want a spirituality that suits their particular taste. Some people come seeking a poetic spirituality in the language of Celtic prayer. Others who know the commitment of the Iona Community to grassroots work for justice and peace expect a prophetic spirituality. In Celtic Christian tradition, the gospel finds both poetic voice and political commitment as far back as the time of St. Columba. But what our guests often do not expect is to confront God in one another. Their measure of spirituality is something within themselves — the songs they like to sing, the Scripture they cherish, the form of prayer they prefer. A spirituality called community invites all of us to hold such personal preferences more loosely so we can simply share who we are and learn to set aside what we no longer need to carry on the journey. The ministry of hospitality dares us, both host and guest, to look into the eyes of strangers and welcome the provoking possibility that God intends this meeting as a unique opportunity for both of us.

I witness the surprising grace of God more often than I can say, watching strangers draw close to each other over a week at The Mac. Sometimes simply being accepted by others communicates God's love to a lonely person. Sometimes being trusted to lead in worship awakens gifts for service that had gone unrecognized. Sharing a story bottled up for too long opens a soul to God's healing touch. Breaking a window and being forgiven can be a parable of Christ's promise, too. A spirituality called community is down to earth, as it should be if we intend to follow Jesus day by day. It can seem very simple, but such a spirituality is also deeply challenging. For we must practise the forgiveness we preach, offer a hand in reconciliation when we'd rather stay offended, listen through a complaint to find the concern it harbours. In the daily and

Questions for discussion and reflection


- How has God's grace touched you through others with whom you've shared a time living in community? Think of times at camp, on retreat, in residence, for example, or simply in your neighbourhood.
- In what ways does worship support and inform the work you do? How do the concerns you meet at work find voice in worship?
- Can you remember a time when God surprised you in the hospitality you gave to or received from a stranger?

For further reading

Neil Paynter, ed., *This Is the Day: Readings and meditations from the Iona Community* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2002)
Kathy Galloway, *A Story to Live By* (London: SPCK, 1999)

weekly rhythms of life on Iona, we cannot escape what God wants us to face. This is the truth of our Saturday prayer.

A couple sought me out in my office one Wednesday. They told me the story of their estrangement — she had had their third child; he had had an affair. They came to Iona wondering if they could go on together or whether it was time to part ways. The husband spoke with a sheepish smile: "We'd like to have a service to renew our vows tomorrow if there's time. Just talking with other guests, we've discovered a new possibility for our marriage. God has blessed us in the most amazing way." It was a privilege to plan that service of renewal with them. A picture of a family vacation arrived later with a letter of thanks.

A spirituality called community is filled with such promise of God's amazing grace. Trust it. Live it out. It is God's wondrous gift. 

Rev. Dr. Nancy Cocks is currently serving as deputy warden of the MacLeod Centre at the Iona Community on the Isle of Iona, Scotland. She is a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and a former professor at Vancouver School of Theology.

Visit the Iona Community website at www.iona.org.uk

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly: www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

Celtic theology

influences Nova Scotia church

by Tim Archibald

The Celtic influences on our congregation began subtly through architects in the design of our now four-year-old building. There is a Celtic cross atop the 70-foot galvanized steel steeple and one on the front wall of the sanctuary. But it was only later we realized how the four 20-foot clear windows of the sanctuary also brought a Celtic influence. As we worship each week, we can gaze into a grove of mixed hardwood and softwood trees. We are affected theologically throughout the four seasons.

One of the distinctives of the ancient Celtic Christian tradition is a deep respect for nature. The Celts affirmed the Psalmist's words: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). The Celts viewed all of creation as being alive with God's presence. Since God's Spirit is at the heart of all living things, everything is inherently good and all creation is treated sacramentally. Each week in our worship space, we listen to the Little Book (the Bible) and the Big Book (creation) in stereo — and that affects us. Instead of coming away from the world to a dark "holy

**When we long to learn of God,
we need not look away ...
but deep within all that has life**

space," our sanctuary gives us the necessary word to gaze upon the world with new eyes — the dwelling place of the sovereign God, whose power is not just heard about but is also seen through the changing seasons and the power of wind and storm.

We now have a greater connection between Sunday worship and Monday to Saturday living. The Celtic tradition holds up the holy in everyday living, seeing no division between sacred and secular, reminding us that all human activity is offered in the service of God. Believing God is involved in all ordinary events of their lives, Celtic Christians prayed constantly, asking God to bless whatever they were doing. The Celtic practice of interspersing prayers throughout the day when doing ordinary things (such as kindling the fire or milking the cow) is a profound reminder that all of our lives are an offering of service to God.



A Celtic cross sits atop the 70-foot galvanized steel steeple of Kings Church, New Minas, N.S.

Even the central table and circular seating arrangement of our sanctuary connects with Celtic theology. As we sit in the sanctuary, we look into the faces of those who worship with us. During the passing of peace, we feel the touch of others and, during the prayers of the people, we hear people speak the names of those they wish included in our prayer.

Each of us is made in the image of God. When we long to learn of God, we need not look away from ourselves and away from creation, but deep within all that has life; this is where the truth of God is hidden like a treasure buried in a field. As we gather weekly around the table, font and pulpit and face each other, we are reminded that all of life is an expression of God. Certainly, in looking for the voice of God in humans, we will hear falseness and confusion, selfishness and violence of heart, but deeper still is the love that utters all life into being.

Celtic theology has also proven a helpful pastoral tool. During a sermon on Baptism of Jesus Sunday this year, I asked the congregation to repeat after me: "[Name], you are my beloved child, in you I am well pleased." A number of long-time Presbyterians indicated they found the exercise difficult. Our tendency to define ourselves by "original sin" has meant that we have defined ourselves by what has gone wrong and not by the essence of who we've been created to be. We've paid the price of this in a low view of ourselves and our God-given capabilities. In providing pastoral care to wounded folk, I have found Celtic theology to be a word of grace.

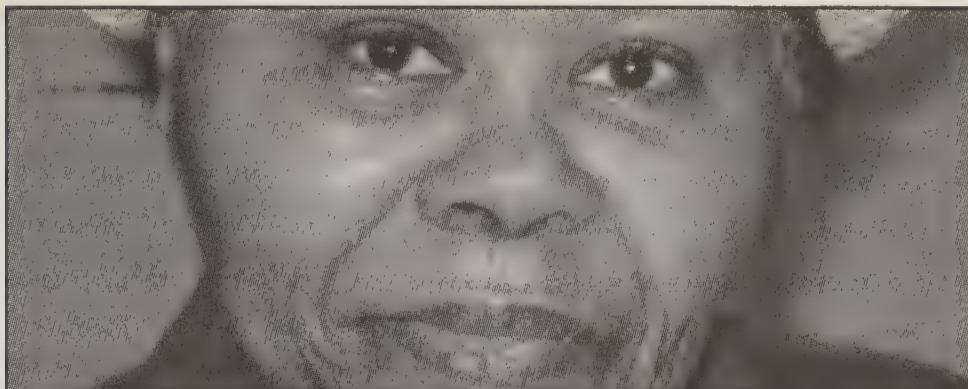
For further reading

Three books by John Philip Newell:
Listening to the Heartbeat of God:
A Celtic Spirituality
The Book of Creation
Celtic Benediction

Following closely the Gospel of John, "The Word became flesh," the fabric of our lives is able to cradle the gospel. What is deepest in us is the image of God. Sin has buried the beauty of God but not erased it. The gospel is given to uncover the hidden wealth of God that has been planted in the depths of our human nature. At the heart of who we are is the love of God, the wisdom of God, the creativity, imagination and wildness of God. For those who have had little previous experience of faith, the Celtic approach helps them to see God's intimate involvement in their lives long before they knew it. Faith, then, is not something foreign, but merely a buried treasure waiting to be discovered in them. In pastoral care and preaching, I have found this approach useful in helping people to claim the unique one-of-a-kind gift they truly are. In a society that cultivates dissatisfaction in order to fuel our consumer economy, many are left with a deep personal dissatisfaction that says "I am not good enough." Celtic theology offers a balm for the soul.


For a new congregation interested in outreach and evangelism, Celtic spirituality has given us an alternative approach. It begins with openness and hospitality, with no ulterior motive except to love. Since each person bears the divine image, we already share much in common with the stranger. Our focus statement is, "We are Jesus' community of grace in service to all." Friends and strangers are to be received with equal graciousness. Jesus' commands to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless are accepted gladly because each kindness extended to another is extended to Jesus. Evangelism becomes more affirming and persuasive than threatening and coercive. The emphasis becomes helping others to discover the Christ that is already within and around them, and to allow them to uncover their true original identity as God's children. **B**

Tim Archibald is minister of Kings Church, New Minas, N.S.



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Dear Editor:

Some of our more excitable and insufferably enthusiastic presbyters have decided to revive the “good fellowship and friendly fun” of a June meeting in the great outdoors, in this case at Camp On Whee on Lake Wannabegone. (We’ve had to use Camp On Whee since our own camp on the other side of the lake has had a persistent algae problem. It belongs to a “sister” denomination — a sister with whom we still speak — and so evades suspicion of being too comfortable.)

Most of the revivalists are new to their office and have no memories of the past attempts that led to the practice falling into abeyance (a good deal less unpleasant than falling into our side of the lake). Some of our veteran members likewise share no memories, but that’s only because their medication has been effective.

The debate has provided light, if awkward, relief from our steady diet of news of fresh disasters. It is awkward for those in opposition both because it is hard to vote against “fellowship” and because the more earnest persist in feeling that any enthusiasm at all should be protected as an endangered species of emotion in a narrowing spectrum.

But saner voices did prevail, at least in modifying previous attempts at inclusivity. It would *not* be a “family” affair. The question of who had visiting rights with their children on the Saturday in question rather complicated things. Then there was the time a rap communion was attempted, with the celebrants dressed in baggy pants, reversed baseball caps ... and Beatle wigs. They insisted (against all advice) these were “just the ticket” to complete the vestments for a liturgical performance that would be sure to “show the kids that we are cool.” Of the eight teenagers dragooned into coming, two are now Buddhists, one has gone off to found a Youth for Christ cell in Tehran, two have “benefitted enormously from therapy” and the other three are spoken

of vaguely from behind tight smiles.

The motion to make it an adults-only gathering was amended because the wording was thought to be liable to misunderstanding. Similar difficulties were encountered with an invitation to “bring your *spouse*.” Amendments along the lines of “or partner,” “significant other” and “friend” each produced significant anxiety in one or other segment of the court, not least among the contingent able to produce or coerce none of the above.

It was finally agreed that only actual members of the court (Amendment 17

pensive concoction of juices but full of beta carotene), and the Martinus (similar to a Martini, no alcohol, but with so much Perrier water that customers would be limited to one) and, the libation de resistance, the Dramphooey (a faux liqueur made up of equal parts liquid honey and cold rosehip tea).

Mistaking the uncomprehending stares for astonished admiration, they pressed on announcing: “We know we’re breaking new ground here but, hey! we can’t always hide behind the old ‘We’ve never done it this way before’ bit, can

The debate over holding an outdoor meeting has provided light, if awkward, relief from our steady diet of fresh disasters

— “including those on the appendix to the role and alternate commissioners” — passed) would attend.

Having got that far, the fearsomely fun-loving boosters of bucolic togetherness were not to be disheartened by the note of caution being sounded — really more of a theme, the kind that played in old Westerns when Indians appeared on the ridge over the wagon train. If it was not to be a family and guests affair, then they would be free to make it “more sophisticated” — a soiree (but not *too* late since the morrow would be Sunday). The regular business of presbytery would be dispensed with prior to supper and sunset.

At the next meeting, they announced there would be a cash bar, but a “fun” cash bar with proceeds going to next year’s gala affair (thereby betraying the optimism of the obtuse). Before the gasps crescendoed and points of order rained down, they hastened to explain that “innocent” drinks were what they had in mind: the Virgin Mary (tomato juice without vodka), a variation on the Margarita called the Magdalena (an ex-

we? How about a costume *evening*?” (They obviously didn’t want to raise the spectre of a costume *party*.) “And, OK, we know it’s not everybody’s thing but, hey! we hope enough of you will be all right with it and come dressed like Israelites at the time of the book of Judges.” (Most of the presbyters weren’t precisely sure what that would entail, but images of bedsheet togas and bathrobes danced in more than one mind.) “We’re going to be by a lake, by water, and it will be dark. How sweet is that? We can re-enact Gideon’s triumph almost verse by verse! Those of you who don’t want to get into it with a costume can play Midianites! What do you say?”

Surprisingly enough, dear Editor, the stunned assemblage voted to go ahead, 7-3 with 43 abstentions.

I hadn’t planned on a holiday in late June, but ...

Yours for enriching togetherness,



Blood gushes out of news and movies

The most popular show on television is an anatomy of violence

by Andrew Faiz

The morning papers had images of body bags, blood trails and bombed-out Spanish streets. It is a common enough picture, one we are used to. If the image is lurid enough and the attached story dramatic enough, we turn to our televisions to witness it as video feed from the disaster area.

A while ago, the constantly repeated image on the television — on sports broadcasts and news shows — was of National Hockey League player Todd Bertuzzi's goon attack on Steve Moore. The same little video was looped over and over again — in slow motion, from different angles. In one angle, the camera zoomed in on the blood trail extending from Moore's head. As if that weren't enough, news reporters and sportscasters, in the name of journalistic exposition, replayed the 2000 Marty McSorley hit on Donald Brashear. Up comes the stick and bangs Brashear against the head, an instant concussion, and then the blood. There is an old saying about the news: "If it bleeds, it leads." And blood certainly is a common image in print and broadcast news.

The most popular show on television is about crime forensics and uses visual tricks to enliven its dry material: bullets rip slowly through bodies, knives pierce veins with clinical precision. It is an anatomy of violence. A cold analysis of horror. The show — *CSI* — is so popular it now has two spinoffs, one from Miami and the other from New York. On *The Simpsons*, the violence is very graphic and plays for laughs as Itchy and Scratchy disembowel each other regularly. On *The Sopranos*, the violence is both psychological and physical and is presented as commonplace. Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* is a splatterfest, with highly stylized violence as homage to the chop-socky

movies of his youth. It was more violent than *The Passion of The Christ*, although not as emotionally powerful.

Violence is an acceptable branch of pornography in our day. You can get Don Cherry-sanctioned videos with bone-crunching sound effects of hockey players hitting each other as entertainment for your 10-year-old son. You can buy compilations of home videos in which people die horrible deaths. There are television shows dedicated to these videos. The morning papers, the evening news, the all-news channels, the sports shows, chil-

Violence is an acceptable branch of pornography in our day

dren's programs, family animations and even Bible movies are filled with blood and gore and other portrayals of the horrible things people do to each other.

After my April review of *The Passion*, I received some mail, most of it negative. One reader wrote: "The graphic depiction in this movie allowed me to have much greater insight into Christ's experience. The overwhelming impression of the movie for me was the sacrifice that Christ made for us and his grace to sinners even while on the cross. Contrary to your opinion, I don't think this would have had quite the same effect if Jesus' death had occurred slipping on a banana peel or falling under a chariot!"

Another wrote: "When I first awoke this morning, tears streamed down my face as I remembered how our dear Lord suffered on this day so many years before. How could this act of Love provoke any emotion other than overwhelming thankfulness and love in return."

The Passion is a very powerful, well-made movie. And it has obviously

touched a nerve with millions of viewers. From Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday, the movie grossed nearly \$350 million, and there was steady news of viewers who dropped to their knees, confessed their sins, stopped their sinning, went to church for the first time and, in one instance, had a heart attack. *The Passion* has proved to be the religious movie of our times. I don't know if the times in which we live are more violent than any other times but I do know that images of violence are ubiquitous today. And *The Passion* screams loudest in a deafening post-9/11 roar.

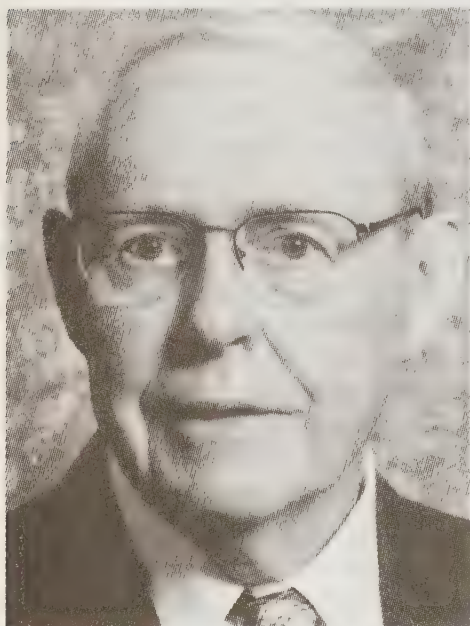
The violence in the movie is pornographic, but I realize it is necessarily so. I don't think the people who wrote to me are inured to violence or numb to suffering. But the movie's blood-lust is purposeful. It is, arguably, the only way of humanizing Christ that we can understand. It is part of a long tradition of Christianity that has bathed itself in Jesus' suffering. It is a visceral response to humanity — that we must feel what he felt. And in a world filled with violent images, his suffering has to be more dramatic for us to really get it.

Of course there are other Christian traditions that seek to understand, embrace and emulate Jesus' love and teachings. But those are much too intellectual and namby-pamby to make for a really good heart-pounding movie. And if those traditions are left unchecked, they lead to the blasphemous speculation that Jesus' love wasn't always of a spiritual nature. And that's a sort of pornography we just don't need. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

A definitive look at the church's past

Enduring Witness: A History of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Third Edition, by John S. Moir (*The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, 2004, pp xiii, 361, \$26.75). Reviewed by Joseph C. McLelland.



John S. Moir

The familiar saying is, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Our denomination is fortunate in having one of Canada's leading historians compose its official history. This third edition (the first was written for our centennial year in 1975, the second in 1987) includes new material, particularly in its concluding chapters and with the inclusion of some 125 photographs. The latter are worthy additions to this splendid book. They give a pictorial window into customs and people who deserve such fitting memorial.

Dr. John S. Moir is a good historian — calm and objective, but not sparing in the critique that comes with the territory. If you want a mere domestic chronicle or a heroic version of our church's history, pass on by. Here we are, warts and all: our early controversies with Roman Catholics and Anglicans, our slow evolution from colonialism to independence,

our too often negative approach to social issues and ecumenical relations, our unhappy Dis/Union of 1925, our recent disputes over ordaining women (now happily resolved) and practising homosexuals (still unresolved), problems of mission (what is it?), youth (what do they want?), ecumenism (always!) and forms of worship. We certainly come across as a quarrelsome family, often along the traditional fault lines of liberal/conservative, but also owing to the rapid change in social customs and ideals.

This volume opens with two chapters providing summaries of In the Steps of Calvin and Calvinism in the New World. Although I would like to have seen more Zurich and less Geneva, Moir provides a fine sketch of that complex early history. Our start in Canada features Nova Scotia as truly a "new Scotland" in its importation of people, clergy and ecclesiastical disputes and divisions. It took the gradual shift from colony to nation to shed the problems of Scotland and merge a new denomination in 1875. And it was The Great Age of Missions (Chapter 8) that solidified our calling. The Long Crisis of Church Union (Chapter 10) maps familiar territory in an authoritative way, not sparing faults on both sides of 1925.

Moir is quotable, with a flair for a well-turned phrase, such as "sharing the loaves and fishes of the clergy reserves." He quotes John Ross of Brucefield calling the 1875 gathering for Union in the Victoria Skating Rink in Montreal "a slippery thing ... sliding away from the high standing." And, of course, the saying of Robertson of the West who wished that students knew "less Latin and more horse."

More recent events are chronicled in Facing New Challenges (Chapter 12) and the new chapter Approaching the Millennium (Chapter 13). Moir notes the apparent domination of "bitter confrontation and polarization" of recent years, the social climate hostile to "organized religion," but offers no easy solution to

problems of the new millennium. What he does offer is the definitive history of our church. Put it on your personal and your congregation's bookshelf beside the "other" history: Lois Klempa and Rosemary Doran's *Certain Women Amazed Us*. Then you can read and refer, escaping the mistakes of the past and building on the great good that lies there also. **R**

Rev. Dr. Joseph McLelland is emeritus professor of McGill University and The Presbyterian College, Montreal.

Most books reviewed may be purchased through The Book Room, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, Ont. M3C 1J7. Toll-free order line: 1-800-619-7301. E-mail: bookroom@presbyterian.ca.

Post Mark

Who stopped
to write a note he thought he should,
pass on a kindness

until later, sometimes years
when something
made him think of what he forgot.

To him the thought within the letter
actually happened
even though he knew he never sent it.

So he passes someone's widow
in the grocery
and perhaps

looks the other way
or if pressed says something small
to fill the gap

until that day when that something
happens to him
and he sees that look

of recognition,
finds his letter
in that someone else's eyes.

— Thomas Robert Barnes

Barton, Florence, elder, long-time member of Knox, Agincourt, Ont., passed away Dec. 27, 2003.

Bruce, David, elder, long-time member of Knox, Agincourt, Ont., passed away Jan. 18, 2004.

Dickson, Samuel, Knox, Welland, Ont., passed away Feb. 26, 2004. A gifted church organist, the richness of Sam's playing will be fondly remembered throughout the Niagara Peninsula.

Jensen, Ken, retired elder, member of Kirk-on-the-Hill, Fonthill, Ont., Dec. 28, 2003. Member of national committees: Life and Mission Agency committee, Justice Ministries advisory committee, General Assembly Council finance committee. Survived by wife Myrna (Fagan), daughter Mary Ellen Groom (Rick), grandchildren Kristen, Colin and Kathryn.

McPhee, The Rev. Ted, was born and raised in Vancouver. After his theological training, he was a missionary with the Presbyterian Church in Guyana, South America. He then became principal of Vancouver Bible Institute. Ted was then inducted at Cote des Neiges Church in Montreal where he had a lengthy ministry and provided leadership to a strong congregation during the Anglo flight from Quebec. During his ministry, he emphasized the church's evangelical heritage, missionary concern and multicultural character. Ted passed away on March 27, 2004. He is survived by his wife, Margaret, and one of his two sons.

Reynolds, Wright (Bill), 89, a long-time member and elder of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

Self, Major The Rev. Dr. Stanley D., CD, BA, M.Div., D.Min., born in Toronto on May 19, 1927, died in Trenton, Ont., April 10, 2004. One of three brothers who became Presbyterian ministers, he graduated from Knox College in 1953 and was posted to Fort St. John, B.C., as ordained missionary. In 1956 he went to Lancaster, Ont., and, three years later, he was asked to start extension work in Kingston, Ont. In 1962 he began a 21-year career as military chaplain, serving in Gagetown, Cyprus, Germany, Halifax, North Bay, Egypt, Kingston and the Golan Heights. In 1983 he was called to Nobleton, Ont., where a new church was built. He retired in 1996 from St. Andrew's, Trenton. Subsequently, he

was interim at Knox, Sudbury, Ont. He was active at all levels of the church, a member of The Presbyterian College senate and, in 1994, a candidate for moderator of General Assembly. Married to Christine Grace Bannerman of Barney's River, N.S., the Selfs have four children: Lois (Winn), Colorado Springs; Rev. Harvey, Orangeville, Ont.; David, Toronto; and Beth (Baxter), Trenton.

Simpson, Rev. Alex. J., in his 93rd year, in London, Ont., March 26, 2004. Following studies at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England; Geneva, Switzerland; and Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, Ont., he received a BSA degree in 1942. During World War II, while stationed in Halifax, N.S., he served in the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve as a warrant officer in the medical branch. Alex graduated from Knox College in 1948 and continued studies at the McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, graduating in 1949 with an M.Div. As a summer student, he served congregations at Little Harbour and Pictou Landing, N.S.; Priceville and Markdale, Ont. He ministered to congregations in Ontario at Cranbrook, Ethel, Teeswater, Thamesville, Kent Bridge, Knox Fort Erie, Bethel and Ailsa Craig. With the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., Alex ministered to the Scrubgrass congregation as well as serving as the executive director of Westminster Highlands Camp & Conference Center, Emlenton, Pennsylvania, and the Hebron Camp & Conference Center, Salem, New York. The ecumenical church and being able to share with others was always important to Alex. Alex is survived by his wife, Fern (Simpson), and their family: Alex C.; Ian and Elaine Simpson; Adele and Robert McCallum and their family, Wayne, Ross, Catherine, Avery, Karen and Curtis; Jane and Gary Walker and their family, Jeffrey, Anita, Ella, Nathan and Marie.

Stuart, Wallace W., 88 years old, a long-time member and elder of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Windsor, Ont., Feb. 7, 2004.

Wisselink, Derk, 82, long-time member of Avonton Church, Avonton, Ont., passed away Feb. 20, 2004.

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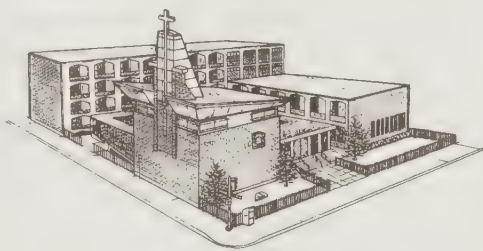
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Counting the cost of Pentecost

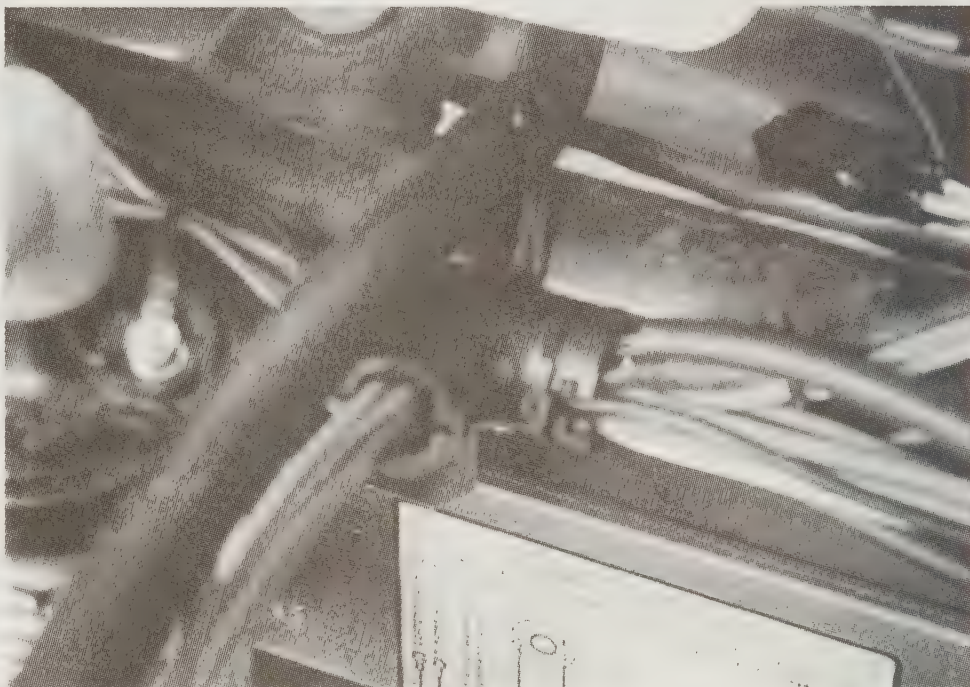
How should we expect to feel when the power and glory of God pass through a mere mortal?

by David Webber

When it comes to electricity, I am severely technically challenged. I don't really understand the first thing about it. But that has never stopped me. I have wired parts of my house, attempted repairs on various appliances and tinkered with the wiring on our vehicle. Sure, some of the light switches operate the lights in the wrong rooms, my workshop shelves are lined with appliances in pieces, and our 4x4 operates either the clearance lights or the electric brakes on our travel trailer but not both at the same time. Still, why wouldn't I wire the 12-volt hot-point — the politically correct name for a cigar lighter — into the travel trailer for our appliances before heading out on our spring deputation tour?

I started the project by looking for wire. I couldn't find any around the house the same colour or diameter as the main hot-wire in the RV. I found some thin brown wire that was almost half the size (or was it one-quarter the size?). And I found some thingamajigs my son calls quick connectors. After three or four attempts at effecting an Alabama murder solution on myself, I even figured out which wire was the hot-wire (ouch) and which one was the ground. I also figured out that, if I disconnected the RV battery, my nose wouldn't light up while tapping into the hot-wire. After several hours, much grunting, more sweating and a modest amount of yelling, the job was done. I had wired my own hot-point into our little travel trailer.

Every job has to be tested. So I hooked up the battery, plugged a power converter into the new hot-point and my electric drill into the power converter. It worked! But then a curious smell and



wisp of smoke wafted down from the location of my wiring. I went to where my new wiring was emitting smoke and smell and checked the connections.

"Ooooouuuch!"

"What's the matter, Dad?" (My 24-year-old son, Halden, who smelled and heard something electrical happening, decided to investigate.)

"That stupid wire is red-hot!"

"Calm down, Dad. Let me have a look." (My son thinks he knows more than I do about electricity.)

"Humph!"

"Well, Dad, you used too small a gauge of wire for the amount of voltage you are trying to pass through it. And you didn't put in a safety fuse. What would you expect but to heat up and smoke that tiny wire? Dad, you have to remember this rule of power: if you pass too much power through too small a wire, especially without a safety fuse, you heat up

the wire and could possibly smoke it right out. It's all about electrical power principles and safety fuses." (My son, whom I now grant does know a little more than I do about some things, loves to lecture me when he stumbles onto one.)

Eventually the RV hot-point worked without the visual, olfactory and audio side effects. And that would have been it if Milton and Judy hadn't dropped in a day later. We were waiting to start out on deputation while our 4x4 was being properly repaired in the shop. Milton is the pastor from Tatla Lake and the little rural community church in the Chilcotin area of British Columbia, where Linda and I helped when they were getting restarted and looking for a pastor. Milton is a few years older than I and several years wiser. Every time we chat, he leaves me with a nice juicy bone to chew on. It usually occupies me for days.

As we mugged up to a coffee in our

living room, Milton and I began to talk about Christian servant fatigue. Not his or mine at the time (although we have both experienced it many times), but servant or ministry fatigue as a basic Christian experience. I shared how, in the past, I had worked at physically demanding sawmill jobs, patience- and diplomacy-demanding government forestry jobs, and everything-demanding industrial forester jobs. For about eight years before ministry, I had instructed at the college level in forestry and was used to lecturing several hours every day on demanding technical subjects as well as dealing continually with complex student issues. Yet, 20 years ago, I was totally shocked when I first began as a pastor.

I had never felt the way I did after preaching a mere 20-minute sermon on my first Sunday in the pulpit. And it never ceased to amaze me how much serving the Lord directly, in any way, often left me feeling as if I had been “poured out” at every level, especially the spiritual level. Milton shared several similar experiences from his own diverse career and from other Christian folk he knew. And then he did it: he tossed me the usual bone.

“But what would we expect?” he asked. “What would we expect when the power and glory of God is such that no one can see the face of God and live [Exodus 3:6; 33:21]? What would we expect when that same power and glory pass through us? What would we expect when Almighty God uses a person as a channel to communicate Christian hope into another person’s life? How would we expect to feel after that? It’s just too much power and glory passing through too small a conduit.”

When coffee was done, we prayed; then Judy and Milton left. But a little light had flashed on as Milton tossed his bone. It got brighter the more I chewed on it. I shared it with Linda later the same day, and she gnawed on it with me. The light got brighter still. I am still gnawing on the bone and holding all kinds of ministry experiences up to the light.

I have wrestled with that spent feeling after a ministry episode for years. I am not talking about burnout or stress here, which also happens in ministry — usually a debilitating, long-term and dangerous experience. I am talking about

something more pervasive in some ways — usually lasting only a short time following a ministry episode, deeply spiritual in nature as well as physical and mental, yet fairly quickly recovered from provided rest is applied.

I have examined this experience of feeling poured out in serving Christ through the lens of all sorts of books that approach it from primarily a psychological perspective. But the psychological lens is of little help in understanding it. I have looked at it through the lens of common sense, thinking maybe it simply indicates I am not a people person. Maybe I’m not cut out to do ministry. But why does this experience of ministry

God’s spirit passes through us to touch other people with Christ’s grace

fatigue seem almost universal to Christians who serve the Lord directly? Is no one cut out for this work? I have read and thought and ruminated and contemplated and sometimes cried out loud. It has all left me in the dark. And then a hot-wire and Milton’s wisdom and it all makes sense.

Could it be as simple as too much power passing through too small a wire? As Milton put it, “What would you expect to feel like when the power and glory of God pass through a mere mortal to communicate Christian hope into another person’s life?” And this suggestion made all the difference to me. It makes what I have often categorized as negative as somehow positive instead — something I can expect and plan around rather than run from. It gives me insight into God’s spiritual power and me — a principle to help me appreciate what’s going on.

It is Pentecost this week. And I realize this new perspective is a Pentecost perspective. I have usually looked at Pentecost in terms of what it would bring to me. I have prayed: “Lord, pour more of your Holy Spirit into me to fill me up with your power and strength. Bless me with a special outpouring of your Holy Spirit.” To be blunt, that prayer for the blessing of Holy Spirit power for my

own benefit has never really been answered, at least not to my satisfaction. But, man-oh-man, has God ever poured his Holy Spirit power through me. And, woman-oh-woman, have I ever felt its passage. But I had never really appreciated the poured-out feeling of fatigue that always comes with Christian service as evidence of being filled with and used by the Holy Spirit — a poured-through experience. Rather, I tended to see it as evidence of personal weakness, something to be overcome.

I am rethinking this Pentecost stuff and what I am supposed to feel as I am “filled” by the Holy Spirit. I never really thought in terms of the cost of Pentecost before. But the whole point of the outpouring of God’s Spirit is not to fill me up for me; it is to pass through me to touch another person with Christ’s grace. I think this is the significance of what Jesus says: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth” (Acts 1:8). Interestingly, the word translated “witness” can also be translated “martyr.” Now there is a descriptive word for what I am calling “ministry fatigue.”

I think I finally get the gist of what Paul meant when he wrote about his ministry: “I am being poured out as a libation” (Philippians 2:17). I think I also understand why he could say he rejoiced as he was poured out. I think I finally begin to understand our Lord when he said to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). I think I may even appreciate why Jesus could feel the power passing from him through the mere touch of the hem of his garment (Mark 5:30). And, more than anything else, I think I understand better now why Jesus continually went to be alone in the desert to rest and pray. It is all a matter of spiritual power principles and safety fuses, and the cost of Pentecost. At least, it seems so to me. **R**

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter’s Aspen: Embracing the Creator’s Fire*.

called to wonder

Written by Erin Walton,
First Church, Edmonton

The Season of Pentecost

The school calendar says school is almost over. The calendar at home says summer is almost here. And the church calendar tells us the Season of Pentecost is here now!

Pentecost is the season that comes after Easter. It is a time to celebrate the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, helping us to do the work of Jesus Christ. God sends his Holy Spirit to work among us without being seen, except by the effect he has in us and the people surrounding us. The Holy Spirit is like the wind — think of all the work the wind does without being seen.



**This kite
wouldn't be able
to fly without
the wind!**

Make your own twirling windmills and watch the wind at work!

Every time you use your windmill or fly a kite, think of the Holy Spirit at work in your life, helping you to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

What you need:

- Ruler
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Pins with large heads
- Straws or pencils
- Stiff coloured paper
- Small beads

What you do:

1. Using your ruler, measure and draw two equal-size squares on two different colours of paper.
2. Cut out the squares.
3. Using the ruler, draw two diagonal lines across each square so they cross in the middle. Cut two-thirds of the way along each line toward the centre.
4. Holding the squares of paper together, bend the paper along each cut line toward the centre. Hold the corners with your fingers until you have all four corners folded into the centre.
5. Push a pin through the centre making sure it goes through all four corners. Then slip a small bead on the back.
6. Push the pin into the eraser of a pencil or the straw.
7. Take your windmill outside and watch the wind at work!



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My father never broke a promise

His wisdom was born long before the Romans imposed their language on the world

The anniversary of the death of my father. Oh how I miss him. I remember as a boy in England how I would stand next to him as he washed and he would chat away, telling me tales of his own childhood and letting little drops of moral tuition fall into my lap. Simple, and quite marvellous. "A promise is a promise." It was. He never broke one. He was my father.

He drove a black London taxi for more than 40 years. It was a job that attracted waves of poor young men after the Second World War, a job that paid a decent wage if you were willing to work a 70-hour week and not complain or give up.

When I was small and we were driving back from soccer matches, he would sometimes pick people up who were hailing cabs along the way. He wasn't supposed to, not with me there. But I was six or seven and sat in the hollow space next to the driver's seat where the luggage was stored and where he had placed a special little seat. I was barely noticed.

I could never understand why the passengers treated him with such contempt, such patronizing disregard. He was "Cabby" and "Driver" and "You!" No he wasn't; he was my dad. But he smiled, said nothing and did his job. They weren't good enough to walk in his shadow. I knew that, and he knew I knew that. Which is what really mattered.

And then he told me more stories from his past. He told me about the times he boxed for the RAF. Oh, the pride. And about how his German cousin had gone back to Berlin in the 1930s to rescue his family. The family did not escape, and the cousin never came back. A long time ago, said my father, and not for you to

worry about. He winked, a wink full of confidence. Never again, he said. I believed him. He was my father.

He always looked so strong, so able to protect me, so powerful. Powerful enough to cry when he felt the need. I heard him weep when my grandmother died. Confusing. How should I react? What should I do? Just be there, as he was for me. He came into my room, saw the fear on my face and recited a short

said with bitterness but with resolution. There is dignity in labour, he told me, but shame in sloth.

He didn't come on vacation with us to the English coast very often — just didn't have the money. He stayed behind, ate his cheese sandwiches when he got home and worked. We'd telephone him and tell him we loved him. He already knew. When my first child, Daniel, was born, my dad said little. Just sat and

When my first child, Daniel, was born, my dad said little.

Just sat and stared and smiled. A circle had been completed, a story had been told, a great knight had won his battles

prayer with me for my grandma. He kissed me, held my hand and then drove me to school before putting in his 10 hours. No grumbles, no moans. Of course not. He was my father.

I remember his sheer joy when I went to university, the first in the family to do so. Of course he took too many photographs when I graduated and of course he didn't understand the Latin that was spoken before the meal. Who cares? His wisdom was born long before the Romans imposed their language on the world.

He felt a little out of place, but all that concerned this working man in a smart suit was that his son would not follow in his footsteps. "Do you know why I work such long hours?" he would ask me. "So you won't have to push a cab around and tip your hat to everybody." Then he'd pause. "So that you won't have to." Not

stared and smiled. A circle had been completed, a story had been told, a great knight had won his battles. He spoke through his eyes. And what eloquence he had.

When I received the phone call that he had died, I cried more than I thought possible. I knew that, in his final days, he had known God, the truth, salvation. But the pain remained. We weep for those we love, we weep for ourselves. Then, when the pain seems too much to tolerate, the promise is kept and the love of Jesus warms us, wraps us, reassures us. Keeps us.

Yes, the promise is kept. Just like my dad told me so many decades ago. Just like Yeshua promised so many centuries ago. **R**

Michael Coren is a broadcaster and author. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com.



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SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY ISSUE

PRESBYTERIAN Record

July/August 2004

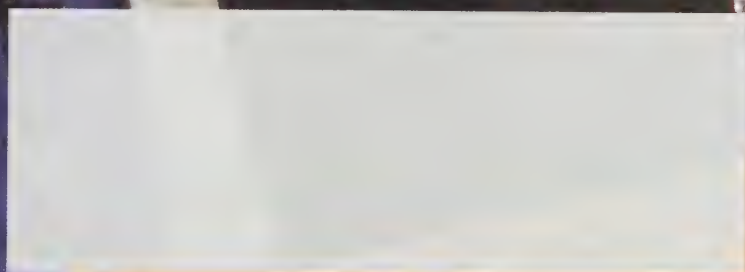
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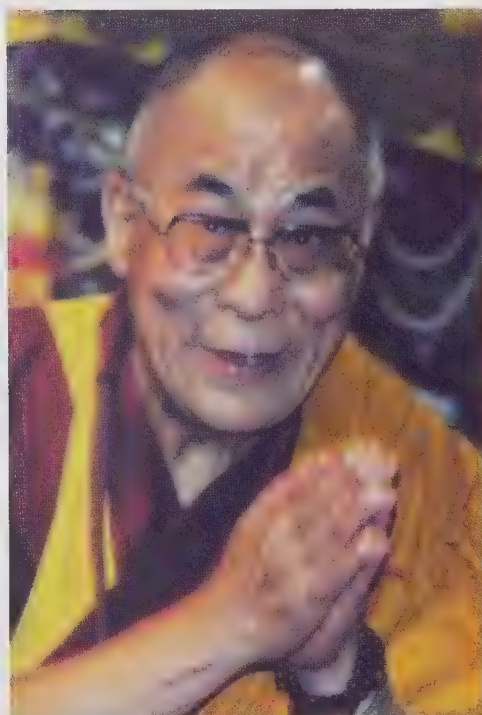


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our cover

Rev. Rick Fee, director of Presbyterian World Service and Development, was elected Moderator of the 130th General Assembly in Oshawa.

photo by David Harris

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Youth grasp need for screening policy

Prophets come in many disguises. At this year's General Assembly, they came as the 17 young adult representatives (colloquially known as YARs). These young people, who are a sign of hope in the new generation of young Presbyterians in Canada, made two particularly significant contributions.

In his first address to the assembly as Moderator, Rev. Rick Fee made a point of acknowledging the presence of the youth representatives at the assembly. Of the goals he set for himself and the church to focus on, the HIV/AIDS pandemic was the first.

The YARs took this to heart. Over the week, through budget realignment and fundraising, they were able to hand the Moderator \$665 for the work Presbyterian World Service and Development sponsors to treat and educate people about HIV/AIDS. Mr. Fee, who is the director of PWS&D, said he was "blown away" by the generosity of the gift. "This week, I've seen such excellent reports and presentations, but nothing matches this one today from the next generation," he said.

But that probably wasn't the most important thing the YARs accomplished. Their skit at the close of assembly focused on the need to provide a safe environment for the church's ministries. It followed a discussion earlier in the week on the draft volunteer screening policy. *Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada* has had an arduous time making it through the system and it is still not church policy. At the very least, this means some churches will have reduced or no liability insurance coverage should someone allege a sexual crime has taken place on church property. But that should be the last reason for creating a policy.

It is clear from some of the comments made in debate that more education is required around this issue. Indeed, it is a serious flaw in the process that commissioners could still have the concerns they did: worries that volunteers might be scared about participating in an event involving youth or children or wondering why police records checks are needed in a small community. Background screening is the norm in society, as a quick check with any volunteer agency, from Big Brothers to Girl Guides, reveals — and there has been no suggestion these organizations are having more difficulty finding help now than before these policies came into force. In fact, many churches have such policies. They make worship attractive for young parents because they know their children are being taken care of in a safe environment.

The church needs to hear the prophetic voice of its young people. As Amanda Henderson from Pictou said, "It's time that we as a church step up and keep children safe. We need to recognize and confirm the precious lives entrusted to us." When church members begin to equate the safety of our most precious, vulnerable members with the cost of some small construction or the allocation of volunteers, perhaps they need to stand back and see the larger picture.

How many more stories must be published about sexual offenders who were "pillars of their community?" Many offenders got away with their crimes because they had standing in society and their victims knew they wouldn't be believed. And in more than one community where they have come forward, victims have been ostracized.

When a church says it doesn't have enough money to put a window in a Sunday school room door, perhaps it's time to realize that church can't afford to stay open. Its resources should go to build a new, vital community. A community too small to provide for two adults to teach a class may need to face the reality it is too small to provide effective ministry, at least to younger members.

Curiously, a common complaint is that relationships may be endangered when such stringent policies are implemented. This is ironic, because the heart of such policies is providing an environment for safe relationships to be established and maintained — relationships that are certainly endangered when screening isn't done properly.

No one suggests that stop signs and speed limits on roads are impediments to driving and will scare people away. Why then do we balk at policies that are there to protect those most vulnerable in our community? Volunteer screening policies should be viewed as much a part of the infrastructure of ministry as stop signs are to driving.

The Kinsmen's screening page puts it well: "All organizations, small, large, local, national or international, have a moral, legal and spiritual obligation to appropriately screen the people who work for them, including volunteers. Screening is not only the right thing to do to help prevent potential problems, it is also legally required under the principle of 'Duty of Care.'"

Prophecy on, YARs.

David Harris

Is hope even possible?

It has been a while since I read anything that gave me some hope for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but David Harris's article *Political Complexities, Rights and Wrongs, Cloud Possibility of Simple Solutions* (June) has. That (most) Palestinians do not support the terror but want a fair and practical settlement is an almost surprising statement.

In its hopeless attempt at impartiality, most media coverage only juxtaposes and emphasizes the opposing views — a scenario that leaves a sense of despair. It often portrays the wish that a powerful and bullying Israel must first come to see the light before a settlement can be obtained with a weak and more deserving Palestinian people. Putting aside for the moment that categorization as fair or unfair, the impracticability of such a hope is nothing less than daunting.

Lenn Chow,
Delta, B.C.

Who pays?

I was greatly offended by the attitude expressed in the May Letters — Who Should Pay? To suggest that new parents are placing a financial burden on society is unfair. A better question might be: who pays when our families are not supported? Obviously, the emotional well-being of our children.

Parents who take time off to care for their newborns have already paid into the Employment Insurance benefits they receive through payroll deductions —

which is much less than their weekly paycheque. The new family member means a considerable increase in expenses. New parents are faced with budgeting challenges in meeting their obligations.

Living with today's economy means one income, regardless of how responsible families are with their budget, is simply not an option for most. I can say this from the experience of raising a family on one income in the early years — sacrificing and doing without. It certainly hasn't hurt us; but now we have two incomes and the challenge continues — still not without sacrificing.

Let's take a good look at the families that make up our communities and fill our churches. Most parents want to provide efficiently and *do* "tighten their belts." Understanding, compassion and caring — isn't that what a Christian attitude is about?

Who pays when our families are *not* supported? Most certainly society.

Karen Duffield,
Guelph, Ont.

When I received the January *Record*, I did not realize the article *Maternity Leave — Who Pays?* would have such personal relevance for me. Not long after reading the article, I discovered I was expecting my second child. As a minister newly ordained and inducted, it was with some trepidation that I shared my news with my colleagues and the congregation. They responded with warmth and excitement.

I am thrilled they are so willing to share this task of welcoming a child into the world. I believe it takes a congregation to raise a child. In my estimation, the national church and this congregation are living up to the promise we make at baptism — "to guide and nurture by word and deed, with love and in prayer." Financial support is only one way the church can fulfill this promise.

The majority of Canadian corporations provides no assistance to parents after the birth of a child. The national church's policy is generous by comparison. I feel tremendous gratitude toward a church that embraces my children and me wholeheartedly and is not afraid to make sacrifices so that all our children will grow to be strong, healthy and loved.

Sarah Travis,
Guelph, Ont.

I am the treasurer for a large congregation blessed with the ministry of one of those (apparently) rare ministers — a woman under 40. We will not hesitate to support her if she requests maternity leave. I also support the principle of Employment Insurance top-up for clergy in the Presbyterian Church.

The question posed by Knox, Watford, Ont., is not one about fairness or justice for the family but about sharing the costs equitably between the congregation and the Pension and Benefits Board.

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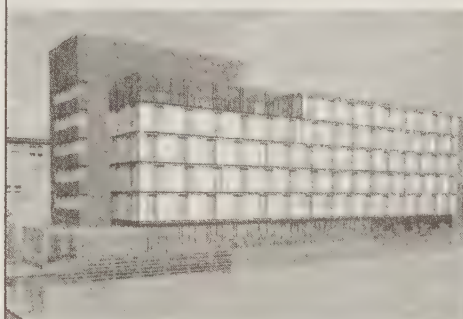


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letters

continued

plan. We also pay more than \$3,500 per clergy for group life and health insurance. The clergy themselves pay six per cent of their stipend and allowances into the pension plan, plus the full cost of disability insurance coverage. All these amounts are determined by and remitted to the Pension and Benefits Board. After paying \$10,000 to \$15,000 for even a small congregation, we are also directed to pay the full housing allowance during maternity or parental leave.

The congregation that wants to fully replace a minister on maternity leave must also pay the stipend and housing allowance for an interim minister. Other than the family of the clergy receiving the top-up, who benefits most from that cost allocation? In the long term, it is the national church in its increased ability to attract and keep the best people in ministry. Any EI top-up program anticipates long-term employment to recover the costs. So let's be realistic and acknowledge that most ministers starting families will spend at least two-thirds of their ministry serving congregations who did not (under the current system) share in the largest portion of the cost of their parental leave(s).

The current policy may have an unwanted side effect. Will congregations (especially small ones) avoid extending a call to a minister planning a family to avoid the large costs imposed by the current cost-sharing regime? The Pension and Benefits Board needs to reconsider the real benefit and impact of the current policy and assume the cost of the entire top-up from EI benefits of pre-leave income.

*Wilco Vermeulen,
Guelph, Ont.*

What would Jesus say today?

In the discussion on homosexuality, I have found two letters particularly helpful. Paul Cooper, David Hiebert and Alicia Cooper (March 2004) quoted an enlightening reference from Rev. Peter Gomes's book *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*. It responded to questions I have been asking: what did the people of Bible times understand and know about homosexuality? what is the cultural context for the apostle Paul's unequivocal condemnation of that lifestyle?

The second letter from Rev. Dr. John Carr (April 2004) described an experience similar to my own. As a graduate student in the 1980s, I took a course on human sexuality at which three lesbians shared their experiences. Raised in the church, I had one position: the Bible says homosexuality is wrong. But as I listened to these women, I had a mind-turning experience and came to realize these women can no more help who they are than I can help the colour of my skin. As a brown-skinned Jamaican, I have known my share of unfair rejection.

For the past 20 years, I have been reading, praying, listening and questioning to understand what it means to be homosexual and to integrate new information with my commitment to Scripture. In Scripture, I find passages that bolster an anti-gay position as well as passages that rebuke it. Most of all, I am inspired by Jesus' declared mission to proclaim freedom for prisoners and to release the oppressed.

In recent years, our society has made great strides in releasing gays from their captivity and lifting their oppression, but the church is lagging behind. How I welcomed the draft report of the special committee on sexual orientation, and how disappointed I was that it was not officially approved for congregations to study. Meanwhile, the official position of the church (acknowledging the condition of being gay but not sanctioning the practice) serves to keep gays emotionally isolated, socially deprived and spiritually vulnerable. This sets up a climate for gays in the church either to deny who they are or to conceal what they do.

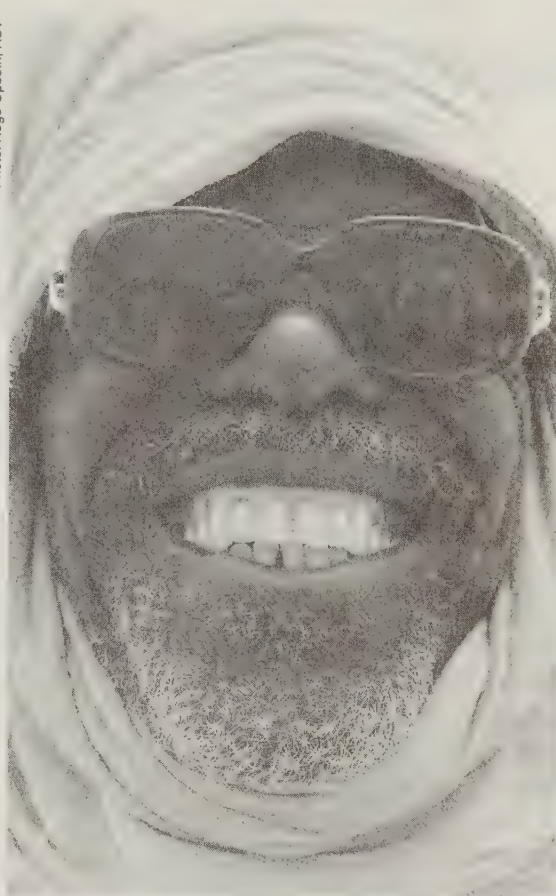
I read Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees: "You load people down with burdens they can hardly carry ... You have neglected the more important matters ... justice, mercy and faithfulness." I wonder what Jesus would say to us today.

Joyce Gladwell,
Elmira, Ont.

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

Seeking Refuge

Photo: Hege Opseth, ACT



Abdullah, a refugee from Darfur, Sudan, is helping put up tents in a refugee camp in Chad. His quick smile displays his incredible spirit and will to survive.

Darfur Province in Western Sudan is being described as one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world today. In an intense civil conflict, militia groups have raided villages, burned houses, looted communities, damaged crops, killed civilians and raped women. Almost 1.2 million people have been internally displaced and more than 180,000 have fled to neighbouring Chad.

Presbyterian World Service & Development has sent \$20,000 to Action by Churches Together to help

provide refugees and internally displaced persons with blankets, kitchen utensils, seeds, agricultural implements, educational materials, water pumps and basic health services.

"People from Darfur have an incredible sense of survival. They don't give up," says Kjell Moen of an emergency team supported by Action by Churches Together members.

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'Faith of our grandparents living still'

My maternal grandfather died three weeks before I was born, and I was given his name as my middle name. My paternal grandfather also died when I was very young. My grandmothers, however, were key figures throughout my formative years. Along with my parents, they gave me a solid foundation in the Christian faith.

What did I learn from them? I learned family is the bedrock of an anchored life. I learned home is a beautiful place where friends gather and are warmly welcomed. I learned friends are second only to family in importance. I learned community work is our response for the privilege of living in a blessed country. My grandmothers taught me a garden gives pleasure and healthy work — shovelling snow and cutting grass are good physical exercise. (Today it is called ecology.) I learned African violets like cold tea. I learned the church is a source of strength and wisdom. I learned death comes to all, and we should cherish the days we are given. I learned the Bible is a tool with which to approach the world, not a club with which to conquer it. I learned there are many disappointments in life, and there are days when sadness should be embraced and worked through, but happier days are sure to follow.

My grandmothers showed me how quiet hobbies build up one's spirit and a game of Chinese checkers unites and provides enjoyable entertainment to those who are older. I learned small tasks done around the house of an older person have a value far beyond accomplishing the obvious. I learned a young person visiting an older person on a quiet snowy evening is cherished in both hearts for years to come. I learned physical setbacks will happen, but quiet dignity is

honoured, and both young and old can learn great lessons from such tribulations. My grandmothers showed me things many saints learned only after a lifetime of struggle: "the sacrament of the present moment," prayer pays loving attention to the smallest details, and our simplest acts can have great significance. I learned the village cenotaph should be honoured for it signifies great sacrifice, brings together the memories of many people and remembers people who are still part of our lives although they no longer live among us.

Pass on your faith in God, life and love. Share what makes you smile, cry and laugh

Faith and the foundations for one's spiritual life are generally not gleaned from a course, seminar, textbook or five-point plan. I believe they come primarily from people closest to a child in his or her formative years. Along with my parents and grandparents was a wonderful array of people in my home church and the wider Killam, Alta., community. Schoolteachers, hospital workers, farmers, ranchers and merchants on main street — each person, a member of one of the six churches in the town, contributed to raising all the children.

One of the most enduring memories of my years with the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria centres on a visit I made to the northern Nigerian and largely Muslim city of Kano. A modern sprawling city has grown up around the old clay-walled city, and at its heart is a huge mosque. Each Friday, the streets leading to the mosque are closed to motorists as thou-

sands of worshippers head to that area. Few get inside the mosque — only the fortunate, the strong and the privileged. Most line up on the streets radiating out from the mosque. One very hot Friday, I stood on one such street and watched the faithful gather. Row upon row of men took their positions; each stood with a prayer mat unrolled before him.

I noticed one man, resplendent in a white robe and carrying his mat under his arm, arriving with his young son in equally glimmering robe and white cap. He took his place beside the other men, unrolling his mat. The son, after gazing all around, stood silently beside his father. The man did not speak. The prayers commenced. Thousands upon thousands of men stood, bowed, knelt and rose again in unison. The young boy remained standing, obviously captivated by the sea of humanity all around him. The father still did not speak to his son. The men repeated their movements — standing, bowing and kneeling. After some time, the young boy unrolled his mat and joined his father — bowing, kneeling, head resting on his mat, rising.

I was reminded of this recently. It was 5:50 a.m. I was driving out of Toronto and stopped at a red light. Crossing the road was a man in Muslim garb, his prayer mat under his arm, heading to morning prayers. Beside him, wearing a Raptors jacket with Muslim garb beneath, was his young son. That was the genesis of this article.

While I would not haul people back to the 1950s and 1960s, I believe a challenge lies before parents and grandparents today. As we set out on summer holidays, I hope there will be many gatherings of grandchildren and grandparents. I also hope parents and children



Moderator Richard Fee's maternal grandmother, Letitia (Fairweather) York, with great-grandson Bill Fee.

will spend quality time together, sharing their sources of joy and happiness, their aspirations, dreams and frustrations, their special hobbies and stories from school and workplace. Within that sharing, I hope grandparents feel free to express what the church means to them — and how they hope their beliefs and faith are being passed on. If they are expressed in genuine, heartfelt words, a seed will be sown. This should not be a guilt trip or a heavy-duty session but rather a spontaneous, honest sharing of what a person feels is life-giving and strengthening. Pass on your faith in God, life and love. Share what makes you smile, cry and laugh. Share friendship.

One of the many fascinating reports to the 130th General Assembly was Ministry with Children, Youth and Their Families. It stated in part: "Christ, the Prince of Peace, calls his followers to seek peace in the world. Shalom is the

biblical model of peace-full living, which was embodied in Christ. Peace is the proper condition in which people are to live with one another. Life is to be non-violent and non-exploitative. Shalom values the harmony or well-being of human life that God intends. To pursue peace is to build one another up (Romans 14:19). It is not to cause harm or injury.

"The condition of Shalom is enjoyed intimately in the family where faith develops (Genesis 13:8, 2 Timothy 1:5-7). Faith is first encountered in the family and then expressed personally. Shalom, whether in blood or spiritual families, depends on instruction, models and relationships. Shalom extends to others through a covenant of peace."

The report noted that "the majority of parents have never discussed racism, sexism or violence in the media with their children." This is part of the challenge before us. Through genuine concern and

in "family space," grandparents can share their concerns about these and many other issues. These are issues confronting most youth today, and they want to know how to handle life. They need concrete examples of how real people — like their grandparents — live their lives with honesty, openness, truth and humour.

There is an African saying: "It takes a village to raise a child." All children need role models. They need kind adults who express values and ideals in their lives. Spiritual life is not divorced from other aspects of life. Life is all interrelated. Happiness in the arena, the mall, the school playground is all part of spiritual well-being. "Church" is not tucked off in a little corner somewhere. If a granddaughter is being bullied in the schoolyard, that is a spiritual matter. If a grandson is having trouble with grades and concentration, that is a spiritual matter. If a grandmother is facing retirement or divorce or illness, that is a spiritual matter. Sharing our feelings and concerns about these issues is part of what the Christian faith is about.

Here is a challenge to grandparents: express your faith. Tell your children and grandchildren you want them to come with you to church on a special Sunday, or on any Sunday. Tell them what the church means to you. Tell your families what you appreciate about your community, music, world events, the church. Proclaim God's word and love. Your faith is a great gift and inheritance — it is what makes you a family and ties you to your children and grandchildren.

Your faith is about eternity. Be bold in sharing it. Pass it on.

Rich Fee

Moderator's itinerary

July 8-16

15th International AIDS Conference
Bangkok, Thailand

August 1

75th anniversary
Camp Kintail, Goderich, Ont.

August 20-27

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
50th anniversary of partnership between
the PCC and PCN

Roy Hamilton was first director of Presbyterian Men



Roy Alguire Hamilton, a man who left a lucrative business career to become a full-time lay worker with The Presbyterian Church in Canada, died peacefully at Lakeridge Health centre, Whitby, Ont., on April 28. He was 96.

Mr. Hamilton was a sales promotion specialist with General Motors, a company he had worked with for 29 years, when he resigned to become director of a Synod of Alberta initiative called Program for Progress in 1955. Two years later, he became the first national director of Presbyterian Men. At the organization's first conference in 1957, Mr. Hamilton told delegates they were "the chosen men for the propagation of Men's work in its infancy." That description, complete with the uppercase M, may sound curiously out of sync today, but he also told the delegates that Presbyterian Men was not simply "something to be added onto existing programs" but was "a movement within the congregation and within the whole church." Whatever the wording, there can be little doubt the organization devoted itself to fulfilling what Mr. Hamilton identified as the group's main task: developing leaders and furthering men's work in each presbytery.

In an article in the January 1958 *Presbyterian Record*, he defined men's work as "the total work of the church — everything that the church is called to do." Included among that "everything" was the ministry of music. The well-known Ontario Presbyterian Chorus evolved from the Presbyterian Men's Chorus.

Roy Hamilton brought an evangelistic zeal to everything he did for the church. This was evident in his modest obituary notice in the *Toronto Star*, which concluded: "In lieu of flowers, donations to the Gideon Bible Society, Rexdale Presbyterian Church or the Renewal Fellowship Within The Presbyterian Church in Canada would be appreciated by the family."

Tom Dickey

Christian bookstore 'leaves behind' latest book

One of the largest Christian bookstores in Canada has refused to stock the latest book in the most popular Christian fiction series of all time, saying it promotes a dangerous world view that exacerbates global tensions. Regent College Bookstore, affiliated with the renowned evangelical graduate school in Vancouver, refuses to sell the 12th instalment in the popular Left Behind series, released in April to huge fanfare.

The authors of the series, which portrays Americans playing a central role in ushering in a cataclysm that destroys non-Christians, have surpassed John Grisham as the best-selling authors of adult fiction in North America.

Although many Christian and mainstream bookstores in Canada are selling the series' final book, *Glorious Appearing*, a manager at Regent College Bookstore said the Christian books "mix a dangerous theology with politics — and we don't want to sell it."

The Church Herald

Church Council on Justice and Corrections elects new president



Maureen Murphy, senior coordinator for youth programs with the John Howard Society of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., has been elected the new president

of the national Church Council on Justice and Corrections. CCJC advocates for healthy communities, restorative justice and crime prevention modelled on social

responsibility approaches. The non-governmental organization runs a nationally recognized project at the Ottawa courthouse that offers restorative responses for serious crime.

In her work with the John Howard Society, Ms. Murphy coordinates information and referrals among police, crown attorneys, courts, schools, justice providers and community service organizations to best serve the needs of young people who come in conflict with the law. She is also responsible for training volunteers.

Ms. Murphy is currently studying in the Master of Theology program at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo, Ont., where she is specializing in the area of justice, peace and conflict.

Ms. Murphy joined the CCJC in 1994 after her appointment by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. In 2001, she received the Peace Medallion from the YMCA of the Waterloo region in recognition of her work in restorative justice models and for her volunteer associations, refugee concerns and national work with CCJC.

Canadian Church Press honours Presbyterian editors

Rev. Dr. John Congram and June Stevenson were presented with honorary lifetime memberships in the Canadian Church Press at the organization's annual convention held in Toronto in May. Dr. Congram was an active member of the CCP during his 14 years as editor of the *Presbyterian Record*. Ms. Stevenson, who retired in June after 24 years as editor of *Glad Tidings*, was frequently involved in the work of the CCP and once served as its president.



Photo by Katherine Allen

New faces at 50 Wynford

Two new members have joined the staff of the Women's Missionary Society at church offices.



Stephen Orticello, who joins The Book Room as resource consultant, is happy to be the first man to work for the WMS. Actually, Stephen is not entirely new, having served as resource consultant on a contract basis for the past year. In his off-hours, he writes music and tries to sing.

Holly Wilson is the new editor of *Glad Tidings*, succeeding June Stevenson who retired in June. Before taking over at the editor's desk, Holly was store/Internet manager for a bookstore in Newmarket, Ont. She has also worked as project coordinator for a non-profit magazine that promoted literacy for youth. She is currently pursuing an arts degree in English and a biblical studies certificate at York University, Toronto. Holly and her husband, Rick, attend St. Andrew's, Newmarket.



Dumbed-down theology

It's not likely to make a seminary reading list, but it was inevitable a book entitled *Christianity for Dummies* would find its way into print. The author is Richard Wagner. According to *Christian Century*, the choice of foreword writer — Kurt Warner, long-time quarterback for the St. Louis Rams now with the New York Giants and a born-again Christian — is a tipoff to the intended audience. The book has a conservative slant but contains useful information about the Bible, theology and some of the major differences between denominations. No women are included in its list of the Top 10 Christian leaders; namely, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Calvin, John Wesley, William Wilberforce, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The list of Christian holy days and seasons starts with Lent, omits Epiphany and Pentecost, and includes the U.S. National Day of Prayer. It also perpetuates the stereotype of Pharisees as religious legalists.

Christian Century

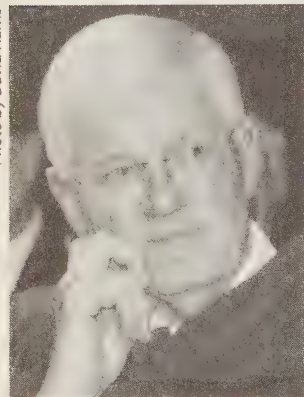
Colleges honour dedicated work with honorary degrees

Knox College

At the 160th convocation of Knox College, Toronto, held May 12 at the University of Toronto's Convocation Hall, Rev. John Congram and Lois Stewart Klempa were granted honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees for their years of dedication to the church.

Former editor John Congram commended for gently prodding church

Photo by David Harris



"John has always tried to incarnate the grace of Jesus Christ," said principal emeritus Rev. Dr. Arthur Van Seters, before presenting Rev. John Congram with the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. "We honour that character today."

Dr. Congram graduated from Knox College in 1962. In 1997, he served as moderator of the 123rd General Assembly, during

which "his fairness and humility were inspiring." He is best known as the former editor of the *Presbyterian Record*, a post he held for 14 years. During his tenure, the magazine won more than 50 church press awards, including the Canadian Church Press award for general excellence for the year 2000. Dr. Van Seters said the *Record's* pages "displayed a lively exchange of viewpoints" and served as a "public voice for Presbyterian beliefs" while Dr. Congram was at its helm. "He's deeply committed to the church, yet able to be constructively critical of it," said Dr. Van Seters.

Dr. Congram's sense of humour is one of his well-known characteristics. He once said of the denomination he loves: "If you want to see an iceberg, you don't have to go to the North Pole. You just have to go to the nearest Presbyterian church." His gentle prodding of the church was done with "prudence" and he "inspired trust even when the situation was daunting," said Dr. Van Seters. "He is not afraid to preach Christ's message with clarity and conviction."

Above all, Dr. Congram believes life is a gift based on God's grace, not human accomplishment. Following his retirement from the *Record* in 2002, he has served as an interim minister.

Amy Sedlezky

Tribute paid to women's advocate, diaconal minister Lois Klempa

Photo by David Harris



"She is very rarely wrong about anything," said Rev. Dr. Charles Fensham before presenting the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree to Lois Klempa. Amid the audience's laughter, Dr. Fensham explained that Dr. Klempa once admitted never to serving formally as a diaconal minister. She was wrong, said Dr. Fensham, as her entire life has shown service to the church.

Born one of nine children in Cochrane, Ont., Dr. Klempa graduated from Ewart College, Toronto, in 1958. She has been a champion of women's ordination and a strong supporter of and advocate for women in the church. Her studies include travelling to Scotland where she researched the role of the Virgin Mary in the early church.

Dr. Klempa's church life has seen her wear numerous hats: Presbyterian Young People's Society member, Sunday school teacher, Women's Missionary Society leader, international ecumenical delegate, national committee and board participant, and author. Her writings have appeared in the *Presbyterian Record* and *Glad Tidings*, and she co-authored *Certain Women Amazed Us: The Women's Missionary Society, Their Story, 1864-2002*. Her accomplishments came while being a mother of three and grandmother of four.

Dr. Klempa's work on behalf of women in the church has earned her the respect of many. Her years of service have been in starring and supporting roles — contributions that have enabled her to fulfill various needs. "She served, but she also led," said Dr. Fensham.

Amy Sedlezky

Vancouver School of Theology

At the 33rd convocation of Vancouver School of Theology, held May 3 at the University of British Columbia, Stephanie (Stevie) Cameron and Ralph Milton received honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees.

Journalist Stevie Cameron active in Out of the Cold program



Investigative reporter Stevie Cameron was born in Belleville, Ont. Her career began at the *Toronto Star* in 1977, where she was a writer for the food section. She later became food editor. She was also an editor at the *Ottawa Journal* and *Ottawa Citizen* and a columnist and reporter for the *Globe and Mail*. She has served as editor of *Elm Street* magazine and contributing

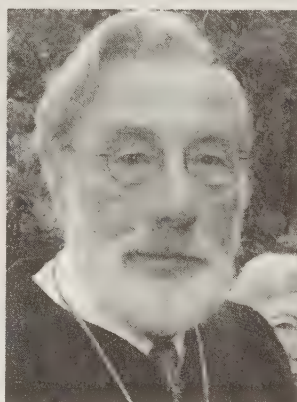
editor at *Saturday Night* and *Maclean's* magazines. She branched into radio and television at the CBC as a commentator on *Newsday* in the 1980s and hosted *The Fifth Estate* in 1990 and 1991.

Dr. Cameron's desire to get to the bottom of a story has led her to write several books. In 1994, she wrote *On the Take: Crime, Corruption and Greed in the Mulroney Years*. Her scathing look at the Mulroney government earned her accolades as well as criticism. Other titles include *The Last Amigo*, *Blue Trust* and *Ottawa Inside Out*. She is currently investigating the disappearance and killings of Vancouver's Eastside prostitutes for a new book. She was driven by what she says is a lack of attention given by police to the disappearance of over 60 women from Vancouver's worst neighbourhood. The book will discuss homelessness, poverty and drug addiction and how the needs of women trapped in these situations go unnoticed.

Dr. Cameron's dedication to helping the homeless extends beyond her professional career. She is an elder at St. Andrew's (King Street), Toronto, and serves as coordinator of the congregation's Out of the Cold program, which provides food and temporary shelter to almost 300 men, women and children one day a week during the winter months. Dr. Cameron's has been involved for 12 years and uses her culinary training from Le Cordon Bleu in Paris to help plan the meals. She speaks publicly about poverty and homelessness and is one of St. Andrew's top fundraisers for Out of the Cold. She also helps other congregations across Canada begin the program.

Amy Sedlezky

Popular author, publisher Ralph Milton honoured



Ralph Milton is not necessarily a well-known name within the Presbyterian Church, but his name can be found on the covers of a number of books (12, at last count) familiar to Christians. What's more, as co-founder of Wood Lake Books, Dr. Milton has helped to establish a worldwide market for authors such as himself. Over the past 18 years, Wood Lake Books has grown

from a kitchen-table business to Canada's largest and most active Protestant religious publisher, with partners in the United States and Australia.

It could be argued that Dr. Milton's literary career really began because of a minister. When his wife, Beverly, a United Church cleric, accepted a call to Winfield, B.C., he decided it was a good time to pursue his interests as a writer. Among his best known books are the popular children's book *The Family Story Bible*, a book on biblical storytelling called *Is This Your Idea of a Good Time, God?* and *God for Beginners*. His book *Angels in Red Suspenders* received critical acclaim and found its way onto Canadian best-seller lists. His newest project is *The Great Canadian Improv Bible Study*, a video resource created with Wood Lake Books co-founder James Taylor.

Dr. Milton, who served as president of the British Columbia Conference of the United Church of Canada 1995-1996, was previously honoured by his denomination with an honorary Doctor of Sacred Letters from St. Stephen's College, Edmonton.

Tom Dickey

The Presbyterian College

At the 137th convocation of The Presbyterian College, Montreal, held May 13 at The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees were conferred on Eleanor Knott Crabtree and Rev. L. George Macdonald.

Eleanor Crabtree recognized for her 'faith active in works'



In presenting Eleanor Crabtree for a Doctor of Divinity degree, Rev. Dr. Joseph McLelland pointed out that her story began in the aptly named rural Ontario township of Euphrasia — aptly named because Euphrasia is a Greek word meaning “good cheer.” Good cheer is something Dr. Crabtree provided in abundance during her 22 years as a missionary in India and in her

work with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at two Ottawa universities after she returned to Canada.

A graduate of the University of Guelph (Bachelor of Health Science) and the University of Toronto (Master of Arts in nutrition), Dr. Crabtree's knowledge was put to good use when she was appointed by the Women's Missionary Society to work at the amply named Helen MacDonald Memorial Higher Secondary School in Jhansi, India, in 1965. While directing the home science staff, teaching English, supervising the gardens, and serving as treasurer and director of hospitality there, she also found time to endear herself as Auntie Eleanor — dormitory mother and mentor to hundreds of students. In 1981, she was seconded to the Christian Medical Association of India in Bangalore, where she assisted hospitals with nutrition programs, served as a consultant to pharmacists, technicians and other health care workers, and organized the first national paramedical conference in India.

Dr. Crabtree's accomplishments have also been acknowledged outside the church. In 2003, she received the Centenary Award from the University of Guelph.

Dr. Crabtree is currently completing a term as president of the WMS of Knox Church, Meaford, Ont. She is proof that certain women continue to amaze us.

Tom Dickey

Rev. George Macdonald praised for supportive, caring leadership



Rev. George Macdonald has been the minister of Knox Church, Halifax, since 1990. A graduate of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, N.S., and The Presbyterian College, he also served congregations in Port Cartier, Que., Eckville, Alta., New Dublin, N.S., and Sackville, N.S. Along the way, he has earned a reputation as a strong, reliable leader “highly

respected by all parties of church and community with whom he has shared responsibility.”

A measure of that respect was evident in Rev. Dr. Sandy McDonald's remarks. He described being asked by The Presbyterian College to present Dr. Macdonald for his Doctor of Divinity degree as “the highlight” of his year as Moderator of the 129th General Assembly. “Dr. Macdonald is a very close friend, a mentor, a colleague and a church leader whom I hold in very high esteem,” he said.

Dr. Macdonald has provided leadership at various levels of the church's life, including Assembly Council, Canada Ministries and the Committee to Advise the Moderator. As moderator of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces, he guided the synod through some critical matters in, as Dr. McDonald described it, “a supportive and caring manner that meant so much to so many.”

In the community, Dr. Macdonald has been active in such organizations as the Atlantic Child Guidance Association, the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency and the Northwoods Seniors Residence. He also helped to establish a food and clothing bank in Bedford and Sackville.

He is also celebrated in the church for another quality — his sense of humour. Many of those who know Dr. Macdonald can recall being reduced to tears of laughter by one of his stories.

Tom Dickey

Anglicans seek compromise over same-sex blessings

by David Harris

ST. CATHARINES, ONT. — The Anglican Church's General Synod has deferred for three years a decision about whether blessing same-sex unions is doctrine. A motion to allow such blessings will be discussed at the next synod in 2007.

The move pleased conservatives in Canada and around the world. The following day, however, the synod voted to "affirm the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same-sex relationships." The second vote stunned traditionalists. In a statement afterwards, nine of the 37 Canadian bishops at the synod expressed their "regret" and "sorrow."

"By summarily expressing the opinion that it affirms the 'sanctity' of committed adult same-sex relationships," the bishops said, the synod appeared to pre-empt the work of the diocesan and provincial synods over the next three years.

National archbishops of the global south quickly issued a statement calling for the Canadian church to be "expelled" from the worldwide Communion of nearly 70 million Anglicans. Speaking on behalf of 22 primates, Most Rev. Gregory Venables, Presiding Bishop of the Southern Cone (South America), said: "This is going against Christian teaching, and they should repent."

But the retiring Archbishop of Toronto, Most Rev. Terence Finlay, said Anglicans

needed to "honour the context of different provinces and dioceses." He said Toronto "has a significant community of gays and lesbians who are long-time members who are living long-term, loving and faithful lives together." Not to be able to acknowledge their relationships would be "very, very sad."

The newly elected Primate of Canada, Most Rev. Andrew Hutchison, said the vote to defer deciding who has jurisdiction over blessing same-sex unions leaves the door open for dioceses to go ahead with such blessings in the meantime.

Bishop Michael Ingham of New Westminster, whose Vancouver diocese has already approved such blessings, reinforced this interpretation. "They've not prevented any diocese from considering the matter as they wish to do at a local level," he said. "There is already a decision in the Toronto diocese to hold a synod [on same-sex blessings] this fall."

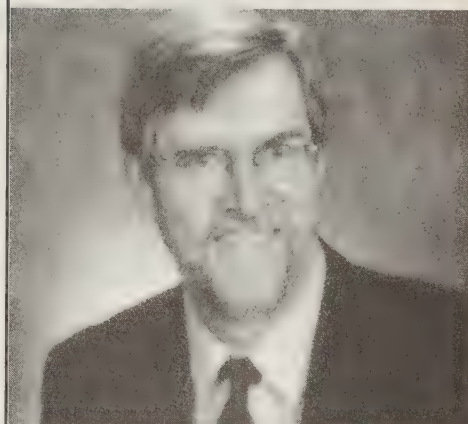
Rt. Rev. Colin Johnson, newly elected Bishop of Toronto, said the diocese is committed to dialogue both before and after that synod. He supported the decision to affirm the sanctity of certain homosexual relationships. The message is that "not all gay relationships are necessarily disordered," he said, and that "at least some gay relationships can be within the realm of revealing God's presence."



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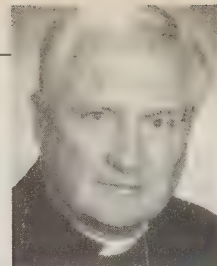
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Outgoing moderator bids farewell

Take action in partnership with Aboriginal peoples to bring about healing and reconciliation

I want to begin my farewell article by expressing my deep appreciation for the privilege of serving as Moderator of the 129th General Assembly! What a wealth of memorable and enriching experiences I have had in the 12 months ending on June 6!

One of the many highlights of the year was visiting our ministries among Aboriginal peoples. At Anishinabe Fellowship Centre in Winnipeg and at the Anamiewigummig Centre in Kenora, Ont., I preached at a service and participated in fellowship dinners. I also spent a day taking part in a variety of activities at Flora House in Winnipeg. In May 2004, I joined the Healing and Reconciliation Task Force of the Assembly Council for consultations with Aboriginal people at the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry and at Mistawasis, Sask. I was touched by the warm and inviting atmosphere that prevailed at these five locations and impressed by the quality and commitment of the leadership provided by our church.

The Healing and Reconciliation Task Force was established in the spring of 2003 by the Assembly Council to recommend a project (or projects) that would support healing and reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the people of the church. The initiative was part of the actions taken in connection with the settlement with the federal government regarding issues of abuse associated with residential schools, two of which were operated by our church for many years. The task force includes: Mary Fontaine, James Hope-Ross, Harvey Pechawis, Vivian Ketchum, Lew Ford, Rev. Ian Morrison, Rev. Gordon Haynes and Mathew Goslinski. Begin-



Photo by Lew Ford

On May 7, 2004, Moderator Sandy McDonald and the Healing and Reconciliation Design Team met on the Mistawasis Reserve in Saskatchewan to discuss how the Presbyterian Church and the Aboriginal community could work together to bring healing between the church and Aboriginal people. This photo is taken outside Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church, named after Chief Mistawasis who was instrumental in bringing the church to the community.

ning on March 1, 2004, Rev. Kenneth Stright was employed half-time, until after the 2005 General Assembly, as coordinator of this initiative. His responsibilities include gathering educational resources and coordinating consultations with Aboriginal folk.

The foundational statement of the task force, developed in consultations with Aboriginal groups, is: "Healing between Aboriginal people and the people of the church can only be achieved through building ongoing relationships based on awareness, understanding and trust." The task force emphasizes it is vital to create awareness and understanding among church members concerning the impact colonialism had on Aboriginal people and why there is a need for healing and reconciliation. This leads to the people of the

church being challenged to participate with Aboriginal people in building lasting partnerships through specific projects with measurable results. The task force hopes Assembly Council will adopt a project (or projects) to support healing and reconciliation at its November 2004 meeting and launch the project(s) at the 2005 General Assembly.

The task force is well aware that the work before it and the church is extensive and will take a long time to accomplish. Aboriginal people have a saying: "It has taken seven generations to bring about this separation between white and Native people. It will take seven generations to bring them together."

Having participated in two of the task force consultations, I can readily testify I have much more to learn and reflect

upon than I imagined before these consultations. The depth of the concern, pain and aspirations, expressed by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal folk, left a deep imprint upon me.

In 1994, the 120th General Assembly adopted a Confession that includes these sentences: "We regret that there are those whose lives have been deeply scarred by the effects of the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. For our church we ask forgiveness of God.... We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples.... It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say." The end of the Confession states: "God not only calls the church to confession, but to a ministry of reconciliation, walking together, seeking to restore justice in relationships where it is lacking. Our church is called to commit itself to support processes for healing of the wounds inflicted on Aboriginal peoples."

I encourage you to pray for the task force, read its statements and proposals, and find ways in your communities to take concrete action in partnership with Aboriginal peoples to help bring about healing and reconciliation. **R**

on an ordinary day

a mother bends
to wipe her child's chin

an adolescent picks
up a quarter in the mall

a woman opens
the door for her cat

a young man reaches
for car keys in his pocket

a girl slips
her thumb from her mouth

a grandfather turns
to hug his grandchild

on an ordinary day
of small common movements

Lord, You could come

— Joan Bond

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Report by
Amy Sedlezky



Rev. Ralph Fluit conducts the communion service with Moderator Sandy McDonald, right, at the 130th General Assembly. About 1,000 people attended the opening worship and sederunt.

Photo by David Harris

Fee sets focus on HIV pandemic

The newly elected Moderator, Rev. Richard Fee, wasted no time in announcing the three issues he wants to focus on with the church in the coming year. That the HIV/AIDS tragedy was number one on his list came as no surprise. Africa, and particularly Nigeria, where he spent 16 years serving in

numerous capacities, is close to Mr. Fee's heart and is the continent most ravaged by the disease. His role as executive director of Presbyterian World Service and Development, the agency responsible for development work and emergency relief, was another motivation for highlighting the pandemic. "Its intensity must be taken more seriously and confronted head-on," he said.

Spiritual sharing is another important goal for the new Moderator, who encouraged grandparents and parents to share their faith experiences with children — and for children to do the same with their families. "It is what will get us going again as a denomination and what will inspire us."

'I shall moderate with warmth — at least warmth by Presbyterian standards!'

Moderator Richard Fee

His third focus is interfaith dialogue — what Mr. Fee called a hot-button issue. Increased immigration and the fallout from the events of Sept. 11, 2001, have heightened its importance. Mr. Fee was particularly interested in relations with Jewish and Muslim communities. "Where do we find ground on which we can walk on equal footing?" he asked.

Mr. Fee's address came after the assembly's opening worship on June 6 at Durham College in Oshawa, Ont. The service was led by the Presbytery of Pickering and attracted about 1,000 people — including 300 commissioners (ministers, diaconal ministers and elders elected by their presbyteries). Music was led by the Ontario Presbyterian Chorus, under the direction of Alastair McCallum, and enhanced by the choir and band of St. Paul's, Leaskdale, Ont. Rev. Dr. P.A. (Sandy) McDonald, Moderator of the 129th assembly, preached on Living Out Our Baptism.

The outgoing Moderator's sermon contained personal stories and anecdotes. "God baptizes us, but it takes a lifetime to be transformed," said Dr. McDonald. Baptism involves being raised by the Spirit, he said, and being "transformed, enriched and purified — becoming more and more as you were intended by God to be." He said Christians should serve as an alternative to the dominant culture. "That has always been our call, and it's a tough job."

Dr. McDonald shared a story about a couple in France who were committed to living out their faith and practised non-violent resistance. They helped save 5,000 Jews from the Nazis in the Second World War. One night in 1943, Nazi police approached André and Magda's home. They arrested André for refusing to surrender the Jews in his care. Before he was taken away, Magda invited the officers to dinner. The gesture caused one officer to fall on his knees and weep.

"This pictures the church in one of its finest hours," said Dr. McDonald. "They were persuaded by the

teachings of the gospel to respond in a concrete way."

Living out baptism also requires a church that can work together. Unfortunately, said Dr. McDonald, "fierce conflicts over minor differences" within the church are common. "How do we swallow an elephant and choke on an ant?" he asked. The Trinity should be the example of the unity to be achieved — three distinct beings operating as one for the good of all. "Unity comes where there is diversity," he said. We must wrestle and struggle with what God wrestles and struggles with and, when there are disagreements, they must be handled with "respect, love and patience."

Following the service, the assembly officially elected Mr. Fee as Moderator. He expressed thanks for the gathering of friends, family and old university classmates. He also singled out two faith communities for their influence on his spiritual life — Mennonites ("who built me up and made faith practical") and Roman Catholics ("for expanding my horizons").

In what would prove to be the manner in which he would lead the assembly for the week, Mr. Fee made a promise: "I shall moderate with warmth — at least warmth by Presbyterian standards!" His good-natured humour, friendly and approachable demeanour, and vibrant passion for the church and its mission surfaced throughout the week. His willingness to talk with commissioners over lunch, allow time for the explanation of complex voting practices, his patience during long debates and his appreciation for the time-consuming task of the commissioners earned him compliments and words of thanks when assembly proceedings concluded five days later. "Thank you, Moderator, for contributing to my well-being," said Daniel West, a student representative of Knox College during the assembly wrap-up. "I pray that others will feel the same."



Photo by David Harris

The outgoing Moderator, Rev. Dr. P.A. (Sandy) McDonald, congratulates Rev. Richard Fee on his new role as Moderator of the 130th General Assembly.

Young adults wow assembly

Moderator 'blown away' by wise words and thoughtful gift

Seventeen young adult representatives made many people proud to be Presbyterian after they delivered a moving and often humorous presentation to the assembly on Friday morning. Beginning with a slide show of photographs taken throughout the week — including one with the clerks catching a few zzz's during a sederunt — and ending with touching comments about what they learned at assembly, the YAR's presentation was said to be the best in years.

Part of the address was led by Rebecca Marnoch from the Presbytery of Lindsay-Peterborough. She told the assembly how important the YARs think communication and education are for clergy, laity and youth. That this is the year of education for the FLAMES Initiative encouraged the youth, although they had sobering comments for the commissioners when they said three-quarters of the YARs had never heard of FLAMES before coming to assembly.

The YARs were also encouraged by the Moderator's vision for intergenerational dialogue, hoping such communication will help "ensure the future of our church." The YARs said the church is often frightened to talk about difficult issues, but doing so can resolve problems and help stop harmful situations from occurring. Ensuring a climate of safety for children and vulnerable adults was an issue voted on by assembly and a move the youth supported.

The intergenerational dialogue that occurred at assembly is something the young adults appreciated. "The interest, kindness and consideration you showed us this week renewed our hearts with hope and joy," said Amanda Henderson, Presbytery of Pictou. The YARs thanked the commissioners who spoke with them and ate meals with them during the week. One of the highlights for Debra Purves of the Presbytery of Peace River was playing beach volleyball with the Moderator!

One of the most shocking moments for the YARs was the PWS&D presentation on AIDS — 42 million people became infected with HIV/AIDS between 1984 and 2004. "For most of us, that represents the amount of time we've been alive," said one of the young adults.

In an effort to help, the youth redirected some of their activity money and presented the Moderator with \$665 for PWS&D's HIV/AIDS work. Moderator Rick Fee was "blown away" by their generosity and their presentation. "This week, I've seen such excellent reports and presentations, but nothing matches this one today from the next generation."

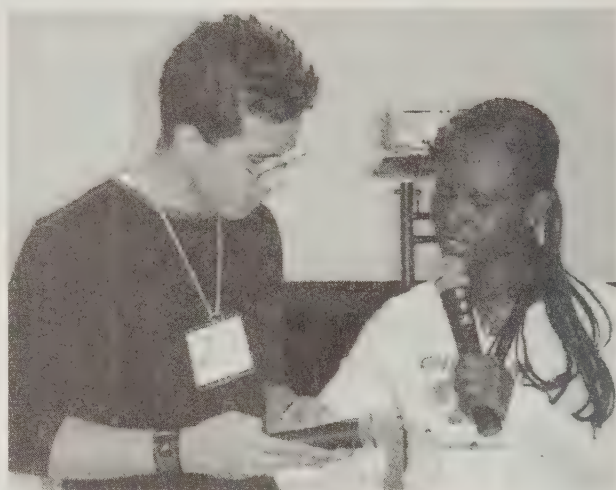


Photo by Ian MacCready

Roberto Morales and Agnes Manu act out one of two skits on harassment and abuse during the YAR's special presentation.

Following the assembly's adjournment, commissioners expressed their appreciation for the YAR's honesty and openness and congratulated them on a job well done.

The YARs spoke later about what they enjoyed and found frustrating at assembly. Jenna Craig, Presbytery of Barrie, said she enjoyed the debates the most. "When they were heated, they got really interesting!" She also said meeting people her age with similar interests and a passion for their faith was a great experience.

Marc Fraser of the Presbytery of St. John had similar feelings. "It didn't take long for a bond to form," he said of the YARs.

"The camaraderie of the whole thing was great," said Steve Schluter, Presbytery of Winnipeg. "I liked the togetherness of the youth, even though we were strangers when we got here."

The YARs agreed assembly was a positive experience and hinted they'd love to be young adult representatives again. However, there were some things they could have done without. Ms. Purves said the voting process was frustrating when commissioners got "caught up in words and the process and lost focus on the issue." Mr. Schluter agreed. He didn't like when it seemed as though commissioners were stuck on little things about the procedure of the voting process rather than having a good discussion on the topic at hand.

Despite some frustrations, the young adults enjoyed the experience and were looking forward to sharing their stories with their congregations, sessions and presbyteries. "We are the hands and feet of God's message," said Ms. Henderson. "We strive to touch the world in the way he has touched us."

Assembly gives generously to HIV/AIDS work

The 130th General Assembly was spurred to action by the shocking stories of the HIV/AIDS crisis presented by Presbyterian World Service and Development and donated \$6,136 for worldwide work on HIV/AIDS. The young adult representatives added another \$665 to the pot by trimming down their activity expenses for the week so they could boost their personal donations. The YARs presented their contribution to Moderator Richard Fee after their Friday morning production. "If this is a sign of the sacrificial giving of our denomination, it is just remarkable," he said. "I hope this message goes from coast to coast."

The request to take up an offering came after Rev. Andrew Johnston, PWS&D convener, presented some startling facts to the assembly. In 1981, there were five known cases of AIDS in the world; today, 42 million

'If this is a sign of the sacrificial giving of our denomination, it is just remarkable'

Moderator Richard Fee

people are infected and 30 million have died over the past 20 years. Fourteen million children have been orphaned as a result of AIDS.

The offering served as a kickoff to a national campaign of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, led by PWS&D, in response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. The initiative was endorsed by the assembly and is entirely separate from Presbyterians Sharing... and other contributions to PWS&D.

The initial goal has been set at \$500,000, and congregations and individuals will be encouraged to help raise funds. The money will go toward projects overseas and in Canada, with education about the disease being a major goal.

The campaign is one example of many international initiatives to combat the HIV/AIDS crisis. The Global Fund, a financial pool to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, was established by Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations. Canada contributed \$150 million to the fund (divided equally over four years) when it began in 2001. In May of this year, Canada announced it would double its contribution in 2005 to \$70 million and give \$35 million the following year. Canada also committed \$100 million to the 3 by 5 Initiative — a project of the World Health Organization that hopes to treat three million people with HIV/AIDS by the year 2005.

Donations to the PCC's campaign should be sent directly to PWS&D, specifying that the contribution is for the HIV/AIDS Appeal.

Pension plan changes spark marriage debate

Housekeeping details for the Pension and Benefits Board turned into a short debate over the meaning of marriage. The board brought revisions of its pension plan, as required by Canadian law, to the assembly.

The changes define spouse as someone who is either married to a member or in a civil union with that member. The term "civil union" was disputed by some commissioners because it could apply to same-sex unions and, therefore, should not qualify for the church's pension plan.

The new document also stated a spouse does not have to be married to the member but simply in a conjugal relationship for a specified period of time. Some commissioners said recognizing conjugal relationships as an alternative to marriage and granting the church's pension privileges to such a couple is also contrary to church doctrine.

The recommendation to adopt the new legislation was carried. However, an additional motion was made stating that the legal definition differs from the church's understanding of marriage.

Church opposes Ballistic Missile Defence

Moderator Richard Fee will write a letter to the ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence encouraging Canada not participate in the Ballistic Missile Defence system. The International Affairs Committee brought the issues of national defence and security before the assembly, reminding it that the Canadian government is considering taking part in United States plans to deploy a Ballistic Missile Defence system. The committee thinks more discussion is needed and urged the assembly to use its ecumenical voice. The Moderator's letter will support a letter sent to the Prime Minister by the Canadian Council of Churches that also denounced Canada's involvement.

Assembly accepts official history of PCC

Enduring Witness by John S. Moir was recognized by the assembly as the official history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Moderator Richard Fee thanked Donald MacLeod, convener of the Committee on History, for its work on the book's production.

Assembly also adopted the recommendation that all church courts and congregations be strongly encouraged to put their official records on microfilm and place them in the church Archives. "We all know the maxim, those who do not remember their history are doomed to repeat it," said the Moderator. "This is a historic moment. There is now an official history of our church ... for future generations to read."

Controversy over safe spaces policy

Young adults voice support and urge church to help keep children safe

The young adult representatives at assembly clearly demonstrated the importance of promoting a safe church environment for children. During the YAR's special presentation, they showed their support for a draft document that was voted on during the week — adopted by commissioners only after a debate ensued and an amendment was made.

"It's time that we as a church step up and keep children safe," said Amanda Henderson, a young adult from the Presbytery of Pictou. "We need to recognize and confirm the precious lives entrusted to us."

Leading with Care: A Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety in The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a draft policy for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults. It is meant to equip teachers and leaders in the church who work with these groups and help them create a safe environment for these ministries. It was developed by the Covenant Community

with Children and Youth, the Life and Mission Agency and the Education for Discipleship staff.

Despite the need for such preventive measures, some commissioners voiced their concerns during the week's sederunts and at briefing groups. Some wondered if all of the guidelines were necessary, saying, if all recommendations were followed, volunteers would

'It's time that we as a church step up and keep children safe. We need to recognize and confirm the precious lives entrusted to us'

Amanda Henderson

be scared off from participating in any event where children and/or youth are present. Other commissioners said requiring more than one teacher in a Sunday school classroom would spell doom since it is difficult enough to find one volunteer. Police record checks were also a concern, with one commissioner commenting that such a procedure is unnecessary in small congregations where "everybody knows everybody." However, the YARs thoroughly endorsed the checks, even presenting a skit to assembly to show their support.

The document is several years in the making. Originally entitled *A Faithful Response: A Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults*, earlier drafts were given to congregations for feedback. The current document will still be circulated to congregations for final comment and will also undergo changes proposed by legal counsel. The Education in the Faith department of the Life and Mission Agency will receive any new suggestions until January 2005, and a report will go to the 131st General Assembly.

The original recommendation called for a "final policy" to be submitted to next year's assembly but, as several commissioners were uncomfortable with this, an amendment was made to remove the word "final." The recommendation was adopted in its amended form.

Commissioners showed more support for the issue later in the week. Ministry and Church Vocations of the Life and Mission Agency recommended that presbyteries and synods ensure their church workers attend a workshop on how to understand and deal with sexual abuse and harassment. The motion carried.

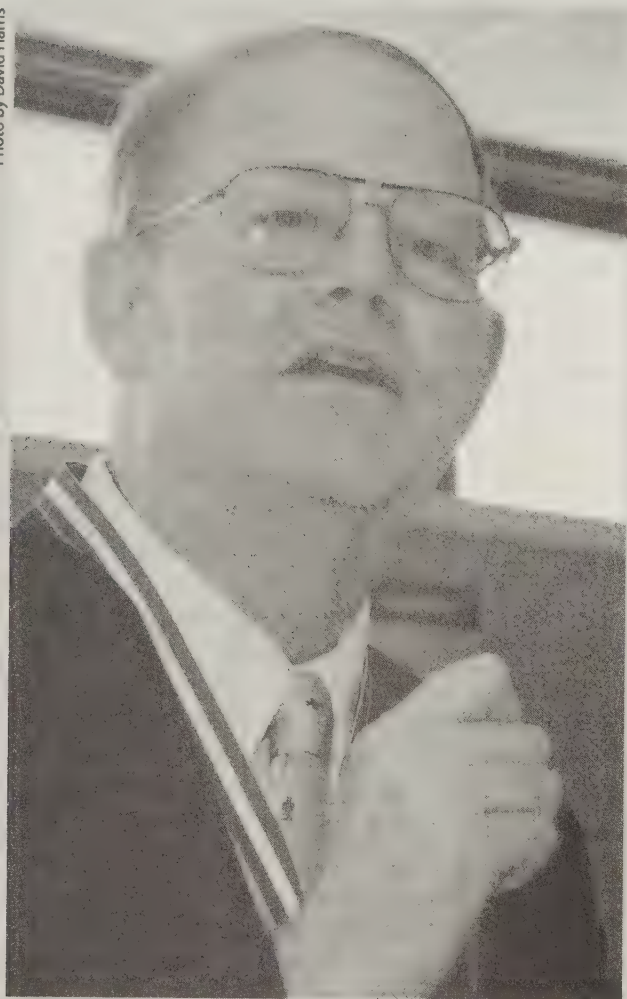
Photo by Ian MacCready



Amanda Henderson from Pictou presbytery stresses the importance of ensuring churches are safe spaces.

U.S. church leader receives E.H. Johnson award

Photo by David Harris



American church leader and social justice advocate, Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said churches and governments are failing to recognize that “world mission still matters.” He chastised his own denomination for sending no more than three per cent of the weekly offering plate outside the country.

“If we truly believe that God loves the people of Rwanda, Bolivia and Vietnam every bit as much as those in the United States and Canada, and that we are all given resources to be good stewards for the mission of Christ in the world, then this is an outrage,” he said.

Dr. Kirkpatrick was given the E.H. Johnson Memorial Trust Award at the assembly luncheon for being “on the cutting edge of mission.” For the past three years, the trust has honoured peacemakers, and Dr. Kirkpatrick is no exception. His passion for mission was evident from 1981 to 1996, when he served as the director of three different PCUSA agencies for world mission. He is currently a member of several

committees within the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches. He was one of the church leaders who met with Prime Minister Tony Blair to vocalize his opposition to the war in Iraq, but was declined a meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush.

Borrowing the words of John Wesley, who said “the world is our parish,” Dr. Kirkpatrick urged his audience to reach out to the world — not only in overseas missions but also on the church’s doorstep. When many congregations are turning inward, Dr. Kirkpatrick said God is calling us to look outward. “The primary passions in our General Assemblies are often

‘There is no time in which world mission should be a higher priority than today’

not those of justice and mission in the world but rather our own more pedestrian problems — how to deal with declining membership in our churches, how to deal with problems related to ministers, and a continuing struggle about ordination and human sexuality.”

He said the church must be a leader for global peace and social justice. Following Sept. 11, 2001, Dr. Kirkpatrick hoped for a new national policy — one of peace and reconciliation and multinational cooperation. His hopes were dashed when the United States opted for war. “It was a set of values and policies based on the dominance of the powerful rather than on the power of the reconciling love of Christ,” said Dr. Kirkpatrick.

Church unity is another passion of Dr. Kirkpatrick’s. “We are next-door neighbours,” he said. And despite ill feelings at times, he said the two countries and, most important, PCC and PCUSA must work together for a better world.

“There is no time in which world mission should be a higher priority than today,” said Dr. Kirkpatrick. “The logic of the gospel — of giving our life away in order to find it in its fullness — is a logic that empowers us as Presbyterians to be much more deeply involved in world mission than we have been before.”

The E.H. Johnson Memorial Trust was established in 1983 to honour the work and mission of Rev. Ted Johnson, who served in Manchuria, China, until 1941 and as the secretary of overseas missions for the PCC from 1954 to 1972.

Membership still has its privileges

Voting for elders, ministers off-limits for adherents

Over two days of discussion, the 130th General Assembly wrestled with the differences between members and adherents and the rights both parties should enjoy within the congregation. After several calls for amendments were defeated, the assembly agreed with a proposal from the clerks not to allow adherents to be elected as elders or to vote in the election of elders and ministers. The clerks were responding to two overtures from the session of Knox, Oakville, Ont., last year that were referred to the clerks of assembly for further study.

"Our response was largely based on the classic understanding of membership," said Rev. Don Muir, deputy clerk. "Members enter into a covenant relationship with the congregation based on vows and promises. Adherents don't do that."

What's in a name?

The assembly gave its approval to three bodies to change their names. The Presbytery of Sarnia became the Presbytery of Lambton-West Middlesex. The presbytery and the Synod of Southwestern Ontario agree the new name more accurately reflects the boundaries it serves.

The Synod of Toronto and Kingston was given authority to change its name to the Synod of Central and Northeastern Ontario, effective January 1, 2005. The new name is different than what was proposed at the 129th General Assembly (which did not accurately reflect the synod's boundaries). If the synod disagrees with the name recommended by the clerks of assembly, the original name will remain and a report will be brought to next year's assembly.

The Committee on Ecumenical Relations, which wants to initiate dialogue with other faiths, changed its name to the Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. The importance of Christian-Muslim and Christian-Jewish dialogue was highlighted and given as one reason for the change. The committee's official mandate and responsibilities were expanded to reflect this.

New catechism approved as teaching resource

A Catechism for Today was commended to the church to be used as a teaching resource. The recommendation came from the Church Doctrine Committee. There was some debate that parts of the document were not inclusive enough, used too literal an interpretation of God's actions in history and failed to demonstrate a broad enough understanding of certain biblical ideas. A motion to refer the document back to the committee for further study was defeated. The assembly did make an amendment to the original recommendation, which asked the assembly to "adopt" the document and "commend it to church use." The term "adopt" was subsequently removed as some commissioners felt that adopting the document was a strong statement that suggested the catechism is a final word from the church rather than a resource meant to encourage discussion and debate. The committee will produce the document in written and electronic form.

The proposed changes prompted much discussion. Rev. Harry McWilliams of the Presbytery of Brampton led the debate. He said the Book of Forms provides rationale for such changes, allowing adherents to vote on virtually every other aspect of church life. He argued that their voting power should be extended to these remaining areas. He also said becoming an elder is a call of God and, therefore, anyone — member or adherent — who feels so called has the right to be one.

Some commissioners supported this position, saying adherents can be as strongly connected and active in the congregation as members are, or more so. Such dedicated service and concern for the church should give adherents the right to decide what goes on within it. "Adherents are not to be considered casually connected to the congregation," said Mr. McWilliams. "There is a bond there." Some commissioners compared active adherents to members who are on the roll but rarely show up in the pews — such members can still vote on major happenings in the church.

Dwindling numbers on the roll caused other commissioners to support the proposed change. Being more receptive to adherents and honouring their work in the congregation might help the church regain its footing by encouraging others to enter the church. But this rationale doesn't seem right to Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk. In a post-assembly interview, he said he doesn't think changing the laws around membership is an effective church growth strategy. However, encouraging adherents to graduate to membership as a natural progression and maturing of their faith may be a possible growth mechanism.

Mr. McWilliams proposed an amendment asking the clerks to make the necessary changes to the legislation that would give adherents the right to vote and submit this to presbyteries for study. The motion was defeated.

This type of change would only dilute the meaning of membership, said Mr. Muir. He said rewriting the laws to allow adherents to vote on electing elders and ministers and to become elders themselves could not be done without losing the value of this special relationship.

Commissioners who did not want to see the changes argued that adherents choose not to be members for specific reasons. Rev. Dr. Morley Mitchell of Pickering presbytery said people make a conscious decision not to become members and, therefore, not to enjoy the rights and privileges of membership. "Their faith, practice, actions or gifts are not in question," said

Mr. Mitchell, but adherents are freely choosing not to align themselves with the national church and be identified as Presbyterian. That they are not subject to the discipline of the church or held accountable to it is another reason not to grant adherents certain privileges.

'Members enter into a covenant relationship with the congregation based on vows and promises. Adherents don't do that'

Rev. Don Muir, deputy clerk

The hot debate signalled significant unrest within the church on the idea of membership and whether or not the PCC's definition is outdated. A motion to refer the issue back to the clerks was made by Rev. Scott McAndless, Presbytery of Essex-Kent. He wanted the clerks to comment more fully on the role of member-

ship and how that notion may need to change in order to adapt to the church's new situation. After much debate, the motion was defeated.

Mr. Kendall affirms the role of adherents, saying they are a vital part of the church. However, this does not warrant the privileges that come along with official membership — a covenant relationship that intimately attaches a person to the congregation.

If future discussion ensues, Mr. Kendall said, it may be a matter of church doctrine and the church doctrine committee might become involved. "We feel the legislation needs to reflect what we believe," he said. "Doctrine and practice need to go in tandem."

"The fact that some people have a hard time explaining to adherents why they should become members means we may be losing some of our understanding of the covenant nature of membership," said Mr. Muir. "Perhaps the significance of membership needs to be reflected on more by us all."

Record's policy endorsed

Assembly backs magazine's handling of same-sex issue

A buzz that had been building all week concerning overtures to assembly regarding the *Presbyterian Record* petered out to a whisper when the assembly finally heard from the convener of the *Record's* board of directors, Rev. John Crowdis, on Thursday morning.

Commissioners were asked to vote on a recommendation from the *Record's* board responding to an overture from St. Andrew's, Windsor, Ont., that the board be directed to ensure that the content of the *Record* reflects the doctrine of the church.

During the briefing groups held on Monday, where commissioners could voice their concerns and ask questions before voting, Mr. Crowdis and the *Record's* editor, Rev. David Harris, fielded questions, endured criticism and accepted commendation for the way the magazine has handled news stories during the past year. Its treatment of the same-sex marriage issue, in particular, garnered much discussion. Hallway chatter throughout the day suggested Room A313 — the classroom where the *Record* briefings took place — was the hot box and that the *Record* would likely be the main topic of discussion for assembly later in the week.



Rev. John Crowdis

Photo by Ian MacCready

The buildup had the editor and convener ready to defend the *Record's* policy and editorial content. However, when the recommendation went before the assembly, the board's motion passed with no discussion and few dissenting votes. Mr. Harris returned to his seat at the back of the room visibly surprised yet relieved at the way things had played out.

"I think we were open and fair at the briefing groups," he said, trying to explain the outcome. "People felt that we heard their concerns and that we take them seriously, and that we're simply trying to do our job fairly." Mr. Harris said he thought commissioners realized that the *Record* is not aiming to create controversy. However, if controversial issues arise, they will be covered. "We reinforced that the *Record* is a forum for discussion for all of the challenges of life in the PCC — controversial or otherwise," he said.

Mr. Crowdis said he thought telling commissioners that the editor would be creating an editorial advisory group in the fall helped ease some concerns.

The board's response reminded commissioners that the magazine has always reflected debate within the denomination. It said the *Record* is within its mandate established by the 119th assembly, which said the *Record* should provide "editorial material that may offer comfort, support or challenge" and that it has an independent editorial policy. To meet these guidelines, the *Record* provides "prayerful, fair and open discussion of contemporary issues facing all Presbyterians."

Princess makes assembly sing

Missionaries, ecumenical guests, national staff share stage with royalty

It's not every day a princess graces the assembly stage. But that's exactly what happened in the humble halls of Oshawa's Durham College.

Princess Alu Ibiam, regent of Unwana Community and an elder of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, and daughter of missionaries and mother of three grown sons, ascended the stage and delighted commissioners when she parted her royal lips and led them in a Nigerian worship song. She even enticed national

'Used to the glory of God, dreams can become a vision. And people without a vision are lost'

Princess Alu Ibiam

church offices' computer systems manager and Nigerian native Nkwuda Oke onto the stage to sing along with her. The princess brought greetings and congratulations from the Moderator of the 15th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Rt. Rev. Dr. Mba Idika, who was unable to attend.

Princess Ibiam spoke of the importance of youth to the church and to the world today. "We must encourage our youth," she said. "Young people must be able to continue to dream, as dreams are something that come from young hearts. Used to the glory of God, dreams can become a vision. And people without a vision are lost."

In thanking the princess for her visit, Moderator Richard Fee reminded the commissioners that Nigeria remains one of the "most challenging and difficult countries in Africa," with 250 ethnic groups, about 400 distinct languages and 137 million people. Princess Ibiam has served in the political and church realms and, although she is part of one of the most distinguished families in Nigeria, she is committed to humanitarian endeavours. "What she does within her realm is more than amazing," said Mr. Fee. "She is not only a temporal leader but a spiritual leader who brings the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people."

The year 2004 marks the 50th anniversary of the partnership in mission between The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the PCN. Princess Ibiam delivered the Nigerian Moderator's thoughts on the importance of the partnership. Dr. Idika said the PCN has enjoyed many benefits partnering with the PCC. Youth ministry, individual parishes, education and ad-



Princess Alu Ibiam of Nigeria

ministration have all improved. The PCC's investments in agriculture, health care, development and schools have greatly helped the people of Nigeria and enabled the PCN to thrive despite major problems like HIV/AIDS. "In a changing world, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria would like to maintain the partnership with The Presbyterian Church in Canada and maintain the power of God's action in the world," said Dr. Idika.

There were several other ecumenical visitors at this year's assembly:

- Rev. Tae Bum Kim, vice-moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, said the PCK and PCC must continue to work together for peace.
- Rev. Pu-Ok Choi, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, thanked the PCC for its "faithful and hopeful presence among Koreans" and encouraged unity in mission.
- Ven. Jim Boyles, General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Canada, spoke briefly about the Anglican Church's General Synod, saying they "had a rough time" and there is "still a lot of work to do."

Several missionaries were honoured for their years of service:

- Jack and Betty Geddes, who are retiring after 44½ years with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.



Rev. Tae Bum Kim



Rev. Pu-Ok Choi



Ven. Jim Boyles



June Stevenson

- Rev. Glenn and Linda Inglis, who have given more than 20 years of service in Malawi and Lesotho, interspersed with several returns to Canada to accept calls in local congregations. They returned to Canada in July 2003 and have begun a new ministry in Vancouver.
- Rev. Dr. Ian Clark and his wife, Rev. Catherine Chalin, for their service throughout the world, including Kenya, Nairobi, Canada and Scotland.
- Warren Whittaker, who has given 25 years of full-time service in inner-city Winnipeg and 20 years as a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministry.
- June Stevenson, editor since 1980 of *Glad Tidings*, the official publication of the Women's Missionary Society. She retired in June.
- Rev. Ian Morrison, general secretary of the Life and Mission Agency for the past nine years, who will retire in September 2005 — a decision he made during a visit to Scotland.
- Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls was wished God's blessings as she leaves her position at Knox College and heads to a new appointment at Vancouver School of Theology.

Numerous people within the national church were also given minutes of appreciation for their hard work and dedication:

Other staff, including David Jennings, Rev. Ian Gray, Dorothy Henderson and Marilyn Repchuck, were thanked for their work in various capacities with the church over the years.



The Presbytery of Pickering led morning worship throughout the week. Thursday's service included a demonstration of liturgical dance by Anointed Joy of St. Andrew's, Whitby, Ont.

Education takes centre stage

Important theme highlighted throughout the week

This is the year of education for the final instalment of the FLAMES Initiative. To kick-start the program, Rev. Judee Archer-Green, coordinator for this year's project, made a presentation encouraging educational opportunities within church life. "We are all theologians," she told commissioners.

The presentation was complimented by the announcement of another educational event — the 160th anniversary of Knox College, Toronto. The school's principal, Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, gave a lively address. Over 75 per cent of the ministers serving the Presbyterian Church have been in a Knox College classroom.

Even the new Moderator, Rev. Richard Fee, mentioned the importance of education. He said the special offering taken at assembly for HIV/AIDS work would be used to educate people about the disease.

A commitment to education was acknowledged when Dorothy Henderson, associate secretary for Christian Education and Ministry with Children, Youth and Their Families, was given the Educator of

the Year award for 2005 by the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators. The award recognizes Ms. Henderson's "creativity and advocacy in the areas of children, youth and family ministries."

Trying to determine exactly what kind of an education is needed for various positions within the church occupied a substantial amount of the assembly's time. In what was anticipated to be simple housekeeping, the recommendations of the Committee on Education and Reception for programs of study needed by ministerial candidates were met with concerns and questions, and calls for clarification, amendments and recorded dissent.

Students eligible for ordination must be approved by the assembly — and only after completing additional study at a Presbyterian college. Many candidates have already studied at length at other seminaries and bring numerous degrees with them.

Commissioners argued that new ministers will be discouraged from serving the PCC if they do not have the money or time to complete additional educational



YONGE
STREET
MISSION

A Director of Community Services

The Yonge Street Mission is a Christian faith community extending God's peace, love and justice to those living with poverty in Toronto. Our community ministries branch is seeking a director, a person of Christian commitment with genuine skills in pastoral care and leadership, great energy and enthusiasm and the vision and organizational skills to engage in strategic community development. This person will expand our work and commitment to at-risk children, youth and adults in our neighbourhood and articulate passionately on the subject of the poor and the disadvantaged to churches, communities, local businesses and government, both formally and informally.

You have ten to fifteen years in ministry, chaplaincy, community work, or related administrative experience. You will offer excellent supervision to our existing community ministry staff team of about 30 and will excite new leaders about a ministry that can make a significant contribution to both individuals in need and the community as a whole.

Please contact us via e-mail or fax (no phone calls please).

Yonge Street Mission invites all resumes but regrets that we can only respond to those invited to an interview...

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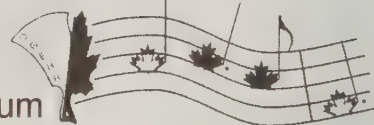
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requirements. The method for determining who needs what requirement was debated by some commissioners, who said some ministerial candidates had lengthy service within the PCC in other capacities. Many demonstrate a proven track record for mission, community service and outreach and yet are given lengthier educational requirements than someone who has never been involved in the PCC but has slightly

Trying to determine exactly what kind of education is needed for various positions within the church occupied a substantial amount of assembly's time

more formal education. Rev. Rosemary Doran, convener of the committee, assured the assembly that all candidates go through a screening and evaluation process before their requirements are set.

After a lengthy debate, all of the recommendations passed in their original form for all ministerial candidates. And the educational requirements set out by the Committee on Education and Reception were maintained.

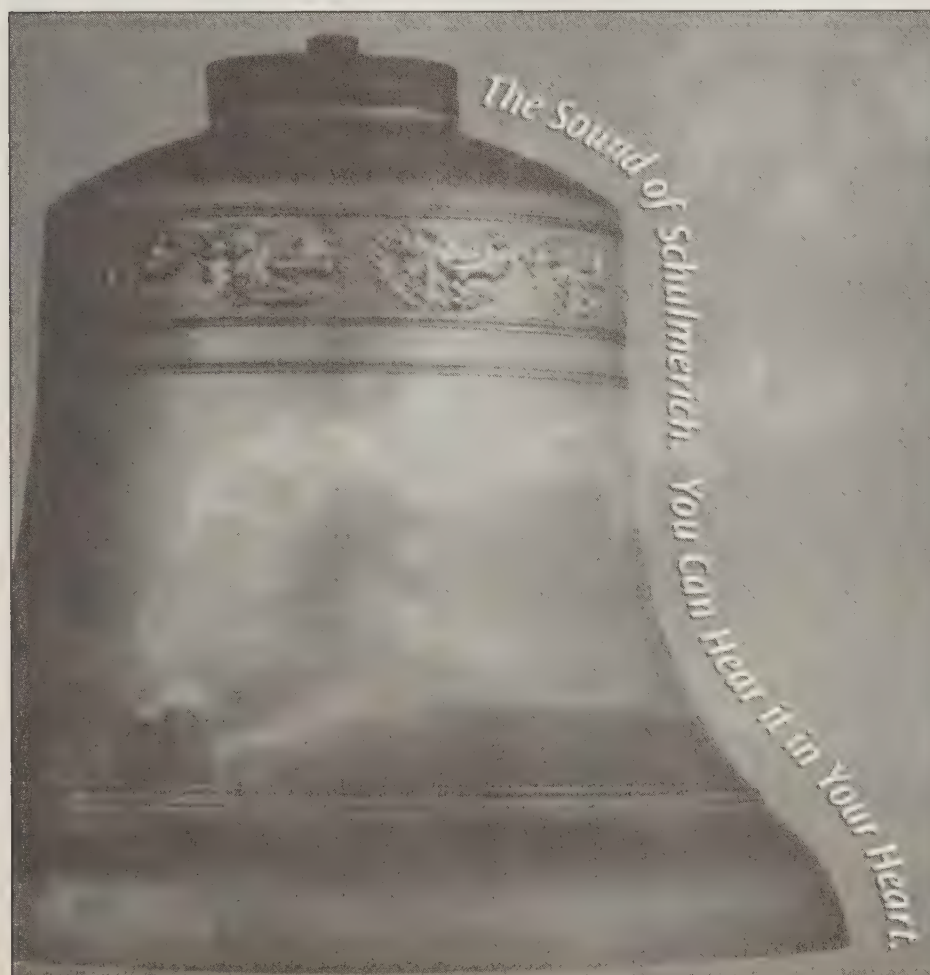
Assembly also voted on requirements for parish nurses. Ministry and Church Vocations made four recommendations, listing requirements for people in

this ministry. The main change was that the Committee on Theological Education will develop a Presbyterian parish nursing certificate program and present it to a future General Assembly. Parish nurses within the PCC will be required to complete the approved program.

Assembly also discussed educational standards for lay missionaries. Ministry and Church Vocations and Canada Ministries decided the PCC needs to establish standards, educational programs and responsibilities for lay missionaries. This recommendation was adopted by the assembly with no debate. The assembly also voted that the Life and Mission Agency, along with the Committee on Theological Education and the clerks of assembly, establish a task force to design these standards, submit an interim report in 2005 and present them to the 132nd General Assembly.

The Women's Missionary Society was concerned that ministers from other countries and denominations are not required to take courses on the mission work of the Presbyterian Church. The WMS's proposal was accepted that the Committee on Education and Reception and the Committee on Theological Education consider making a mission education course a requirement for all candidates entering the ministry of the PCC.

In a fitting end to the assembly, the young adult representatives gave a presentation that endorsed the value and importance of education for clergy, laity and youth.




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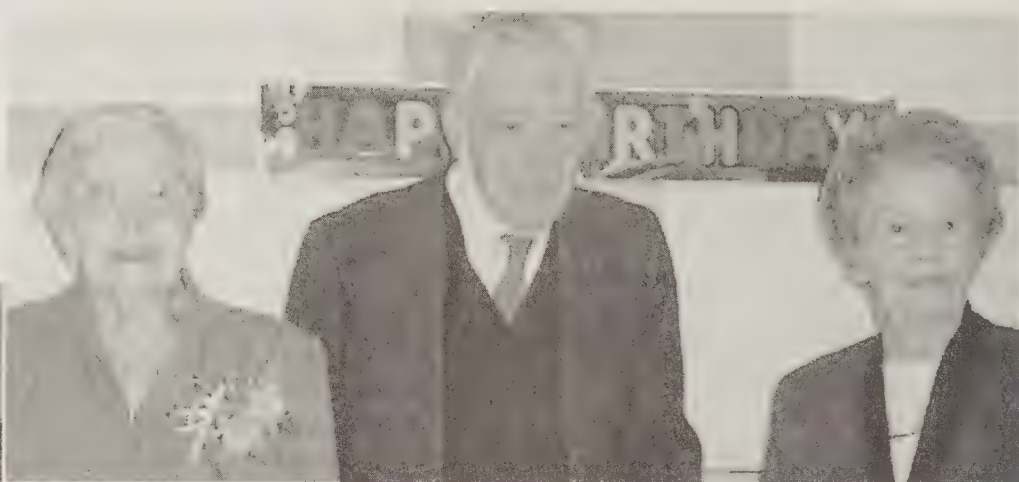
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people & places

The congregation of St. John's, Toronto, recently celebrated the 90th birthdays of three of its members: Frances Henderson (left), Forbes MacLeod and Primrose Belue. A few days later, the congregation's oldest member, Ethel Fenwick, celebrated her 101st birthday.



Members of the St. Andrew's Hall (Vancouver School of Theology) community knit pneumonia vests, toques and an afghan for children in Malawi. Pictured with the children and mothers are Rev. Dr. Roberta Clare (back, centre left), director of the Elders' Institute, and Beth McIntosh (with hat), community coordinator.



A Ladies Aid Old-Fashioned Tea, circa the 1950s, was one of the many special events celebrating the 50th anniversary of St. Giles, St. Catharines, Ont., this year. Pictured: (L-R) Alice Moss, Isobel Magee, Claire Theijsmeijer and Rev. Tijs Theijsmeijer greet visitor Marjorie McDonald. Other events included a Blast From the Past, complete with Hula Hoops.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Photographs will not be returned. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

A St. Andrew's dinner and dance held at West Vancouver Church not only sent kilts and sporrans flying, but also raised money for Camp Douglas. George Whitelaw, the camp administrator (left), was presented with a cheque for \$940 by May Loudon, Beryl Skinner and Andrew Whitelaw.



△ Elder Len Hopkins and his wife, Lois, stand beside the history cabinets they donated to First Church, Pembroke, Ont., with thanks and appreciation for their son, Doug, and daughter, Sherri. The cabinets were presented on the same day their twin grandsons were baptized (the sons of Sherri and her husband, Dave Stoddart).

Norman and Bertha Johns became the first lay ministers to be recognized in the Presbytery of Temiskaming's regional ministry program at a service held at MacKay Church, Timmins, Ont.



◀ Every Christmas and Easter, the congregation of St. Columba, Dalkeith, Ont., receives a lively bonus when five fiddlers add their touch to the ministry of music. Pictured in the back row: (L-R) church organist Clara MacLeod, Rory MacLeod, Darryl MacLeod and Kenton McBean. In the front: Anna MacLeod and Kieran McBean.

This Spud's for You could be the theme every February when the congregation of St. Andrew's, Kitchener, Ont., participates in the Potato Blitz — a drive to collect potatoes for the House of Friendship food bank. This year, a mascot was donated to help with the effort. Spuddy (a.k.a. Russ Horner of the Great Canadian Character Company) is joined by Rev. Bill Johnston (left) and Rev. Bill Lamont. More than 45,000 kilograms of spuds were collected by the congregation.



St. Andrew's, Calgary, opened its doors to the neighbourhood during an open house held to celebrate the completion of extensive renovations to the building. More than 60 people from the community joined members of the congregation in checking out the renewed facility.

Dean Hopper was honoured by the congregation of Albion Gardens, Rexdale, Ont., for his 15 years of dedicated service as clerk of session. Dean (right), who has been an elder for 33 years and continues to serve on the session, is congratulated by treasurer Bob Woodcock.



A Wednesday after-school program called St. Andrew's Children's Time has proven to be a great success at St. Andrew's, Wyoming, Ont. Taught by Joanne Packet and Rev. Susan Samuel (assisted by Montana Roddick and Marvin Packet), the program currently has 18 participants between the ages of four and 10.

St. John's - Winnipeg

The congregation of St. John's Presbyterian Church is in the process of selecting a new full-time minister. Our long-time minister has retired and we will be following procedures for selecting a minister best suited to the future needs of our church family. Our centrally located church presently offers various programs for all aspects of life in the church community.

For further information please contact the
Interim Moderator - Rev. Brenda Fraser at:

Phone: (204) 339-3502

E-mail: kpresbyc@mts.net

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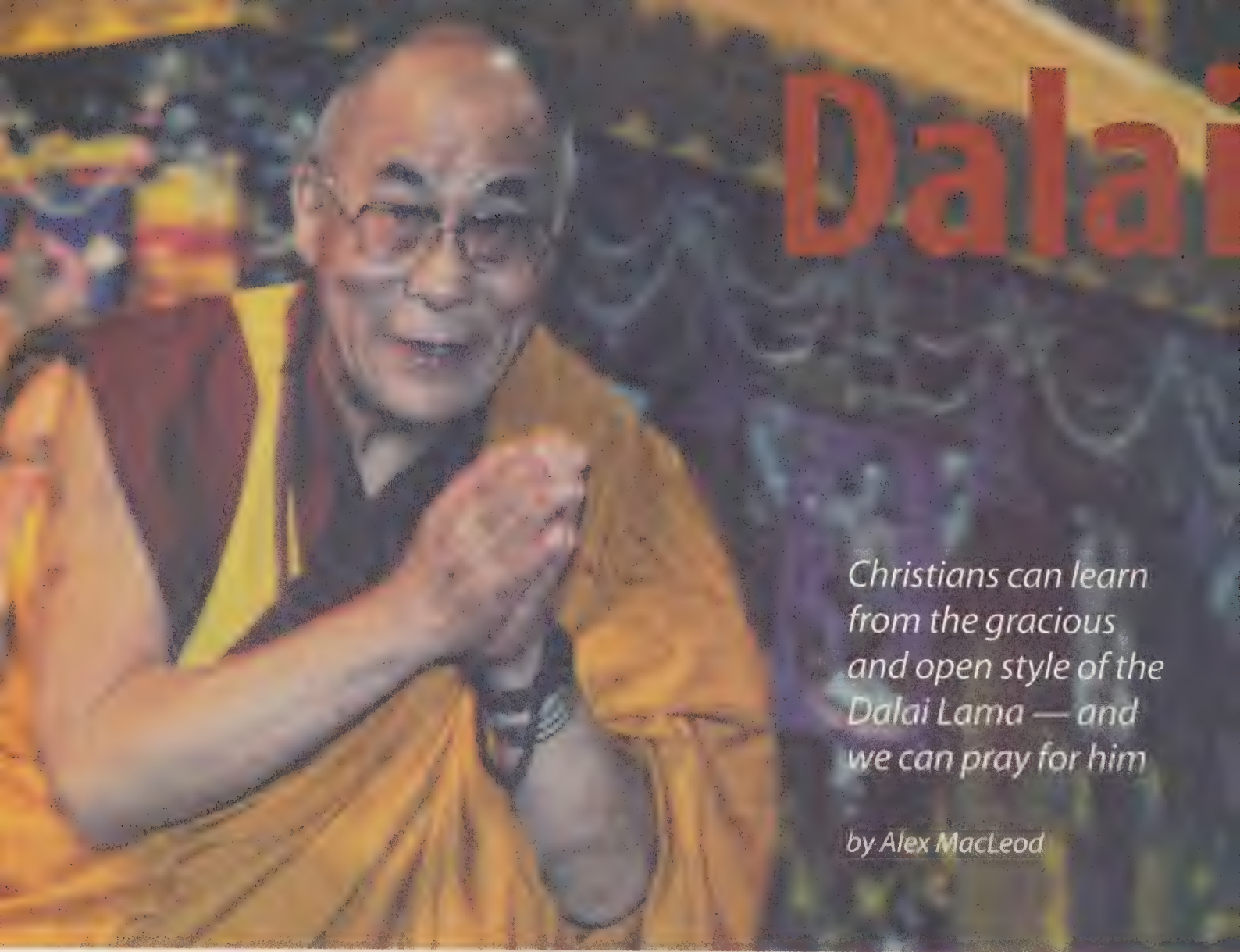
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*Christians can learn
from the gracious
and open style of the
Dalai Lama — and
we can pray for him*

by Alex MacLeod

I am only a simple monk,” says the Dalai Lama.

And, yet, this same solitary figure alarms the government of one of the world’s most powerful countries (the People’s Republic of China), captivates some of Hollywood’s biggest stars, commands the loyalty of over five million Tibetans around the globe and recently attracted a crowd of 29,000 to Toronto’s SkyDome, where he spoke on the power of compassion.

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, was in Canada from April 17 to May 5, visiting Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto. The focus of his trip was the 11-day Kalachakra Initiation into Tibetan Buddhist teachings, which he led at the National Trade Centre in downtown Toronto. But even though religion provided the occasion, politics inevitably follows wherever this prophet of non-violence goes.

China seized control of Tibet in 1950 when the Dalai Lama was 15 years old. As both the religious and temporal ruler of the country, the teenager was thrust into an impossible predicament. He remained in Lhasa for as long as he could but took refuge in India in 1959 when a major uprising erupted. The 69-year-old leader of Tibet’s government in exile continues to walk a fine line between spirituality and politics.

“Politics are not my main concern,” he says. “I am interested in the preservation of Tibet’s culture and religion. I do not want power. When we reach resolution and can go home to a democratic Tibet, I will not hesitate to give authority to whoever is governing. People ask me about politics always, but we can discuss many other things about Tibet.”

On April 23 in Ottawa, Paul Martin became the first sitting Canadian Prime Minister to meet with the Dalai Lama,

despite repeated strident warnings from China not to do so. However, he spent only 15 minutes in private with the Tibetan leader. The venue for their encounter, the residence of the local Roman Catholic archbishop, was also chosen deliberately for its neutrality and non-political import.

Still, the hopes of the Canada Tibet Committee were raised by the mere sight — and hence the photo opportunity — of the Prime Minister shaking hands with their leader. And 165 members of Parliament have signed a petition calling for Ottawa to mediate in facilitating negotiations between Beijing and the Tibetan leadership.

Since the invasion by China, Tibetans have expressed outrage as millions of Chinese have flooded into their country, making Tibetans a minority in their homeland. Six thousand monasteries have been closed or destroyed, and it has

Lama promotes human friendship

become illegal in Tibet to possess a picture of the Dalai Lama.

During the 1980s, the Dalai Lama responded by abandoning the pursuit of Tibetan sovereignty in favour of a new strategy. Now he advocates for his people's human rights and, against all the odds, campaigns for the creation of an autonomous democratic Tibet within China.

"We must use common sense. There are people who prefer to fight. They are impatient. But China is much more powerful than us. It would be foolish. And violence will not help anyone. We have to learn to live with our Chinese brothers and sisters. We must embrace them with kindness and friendship. We must respect them and, if we address our rights, we should use non-violence. We can live together. We can share Tibet."

The Dalai Lama's enormous popularity has helped raise international awareness of the plight of Tibetans and their culture. Winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 raised his profile even further. In North America, only the Pope and Billy Graham are more recognizable as religious leaders.

Hollywood movie stars are entranced by the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. They seem to appreciate the religion for how it allows multiple entry-points, often making few demands on the uninitiated. You can get serious and spend many years practising daily meditation like Richard Gere, who was in the front row for three days of Kalachakra teachings in Toronto. Or you can simply be an admirer like Alanis Morissette, who made a fleeting appearance in Ottawa to introduce the Dalai Lama.

On the coattails of the Dalai Lama's celebrity, Tibetan Buddhism is clearly in vogue. But a division exists between those who dabble in Buddhist practices associated with the New Age movement, like meditation, and those who truly convert. The former predominate by far and their numbers can only be guessed at. Largely due to immigration, Buddhism has emerged as one of the fastest growing religions in North America with a million and a half followers, 300,000 in Canada alone. Toronto is home to Canada's largest Tibetan community, numbering around 5,000.

'All religions have same message. All emphasize love, compassion and forgiveness'

Dalai Lama

But how do we explain all the fuss? In his book *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*, Donald S. Lopez Jr. proposes that the crucial change has taken place as Tibetan Buddhist leaders chose to promote basic universal moral truths and downplay the religion's more esoteric beliefs and practices. The circumstances of exile have forced them to develop good skills of communication in order to get their message out and for the sake of survival. The individualistic bent of meditation and other techniques that focus on self-help also sit well with those baby boomers, among others, who have opted out of regular churchgoing.

The Dalai Lama's SkyDome talk illustrates the point. His text could have been the Sermon on the Mount or Paul's poem to love in 1 Corinthians 13. He extolled respect as the essence of compassion and exhorted his listeners to go beyond ordinary love and commit themselves to ending aggression. This would pave the way, he declared, for a new period of peace and dialogue in contrast to the unbridled violence of the 20th century. Another key theme was that the interconnectedness of life in our globalizing world today makes conflict with our neighbours more and more self-destructive. It was hard to find anything to disagree with.

However, the Kalachakra Initiation offered more puzzling content. Its basic purpose is the pursuit of enlightenment. At the heart of Buddhism lie the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering lies with desire, the goal of ending suffering, and the path that allows escape from suffering. The Kalachakra includes the construction of an intricate sand mandala, a geometric design symbolizing the entire Buddhist cosmology and acting as an aid to meditation. The mandala functions as a kind of palace housing 722 deities who represent various aspects of the enlightened mind.

Mr. Thupten Jinpa, the Dalai Lama's personal translator and the editor of many of his almost 40 published books, explained that the Kalachakra is for everyone, from serious students of Buddhism who go through the whole ritual, 2,000 of whom gathered in Toronto, to sympathetic bystanders who only wish to receive a blessing. The ceremony is more

broadly intended to reduce conflict and violence in the whole world.

"No one is excluded," Jinpa pointed out. "There was a ritual permission taken from the Earth's elements and, when the mandala is completely utilized and has finished its function, it is then given back to the Earth by throwing it into the water. There is a symbolism that the animals in the water can benefit from the blessing too."

Other religions were also invited to join in the Kalachakra at an interfaith service on May 1. Many groups were represented, including a Zoroastrian, a Mohawk and an Eskimo from Iceland. Each delegate said a prayer or shared a reflection. For Christian content, the Roman Catholic and Anglican archbishops of Toronto read selections from the New Testament about loving your neighbour and brought greetings from their churches.

"All religions have same message. All emphasize love, compassion and forgiveness," suggested the Dalai Lama. "Of course, there are differences. Different philosophies because different location, different time, therefore different way of approach. But humanity needs all of them so there is no need to debate. For some, one may be more effective; for others, another way is better."

Prof. James A. Beverley questions how widely this message of interfaith harmony would be accepted within the Buddhist world. Beverley teaches world religions at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. In 2000, he travelled to India to interview the Dalai Lama. "Most orthodox Buddhists would disagree with the Dalai Lama saying all religions are fine and that everyone should stay with their own faith," he said. "They believe that Buddhism is the best way — end of story."

Beverley points out that some differences between Buddhism and Christianity are impossible to sidestep. For example, Buddhists advocate self-salvation, usually with a spirit of humility, but in distinct contrast to the centrality of grace with Christianity. In response to an inquiry about Jesus, the Dalai Lama acknowledged Christ as a fully enlightened being but could not recognize his relationship with God because Buddhists are not theists. He also suggested that

Jesus was a Buddhist in a previous life.

Expressing admiration for the Tibetan leader, Beverley further observed that "Christians can learn from the gracious and open style of the Dalai Lama. We can also pray that he comes to realize what it means that Jesus is truly enlightened — so enlightened that he taught the truth about God, the human dilemma and salvation."

And, yet, the Dalai Lama's call for respect resonates in a pluralistic society like Canada. Having brought Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, Jews and others together, he urged people to continue to meet with those from different religious traditions. Both leaders and laity should get to know each other.

The Dalai Lama acknowledges Christ as a fully enlightened being but does not recognize his relationship with God because Buddhists are not theists

"That is really powerful," he asserted, and encouraged everyone to adopt a spirit of generosity in relating to other faiths.

The attentive crowd at the National Trade Centre did not greatly resemble your average mainline Protestant congregation. Three main groups attended the Kalachakra: monks, Tibetans and young adults of a whole range of ethnicities. Many of those originally from Tibet dressed in their colourful traditional garb and blended in nicely with saffron-robed monks. Both seemed delightfully out of place against the noisy backdrop of SUVs and minivans whizzing along the Gardiner Expressway, intent on escaping the suffering of downtown gridlock.

Others with less elaborate outfits also took part. Carol Boucher travelled all the way from Quebec to join in the Kalachakra. Now in her 20s, she grew up in the United Church but is no longer involved in church life. Her interest in Tibetan Buddhism derives from her personal practice of meditation. "I meditate to help me observe the sensations that I'm experiencing," she said. "I came here because of the way the Dalai Lama draws people together, even those who are unrelated to Buddhism. He is such a pure being. You can just feel the incred-

ible devotion to him. It's thrilling how the energy swoops through the crowd whenever he speaks."

For her part, Khrystalla Chew of Toronto came for the blessing. "I had a call to be here, there's no doubt. I was raised as a Roman Catholic and I want to try to live more compassionately. Like no one else in the world, the Dalai Lama extends blessing. There are amazing vibrations all around here. This is life-changing."

Evan Dales was introduced to Tibetan Buddhism by his mother, a professor of religious studies. He and his wife are practising Buddhists in the Toronto area. They came to the Initiation to honour the Dalai Lama and "share their energies with others," they said. "Being here really enhances our meditation. Our own practice is amplified by thousands of others, and it's bringing about an astonishing shift in our consciousness. The goal is to let go of egocentric impulses."

Manu Bhai Panchal learned about the Dalai Lama while attending high school in India. He wanted to see him in person. "I've always admired the Dalai Lama. He's like Gandhi or Nelson Mandela, one of those people who change world history because of their work for peace. I am Hindu, and Buddhism came out of Hinduism. We should work together."

One final vignette captures the visit. After receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Toronto on April 27, the Dalai Lama was on his way back to the Royal York Hotel when he stopped his car in traffic. He described the encounter: "Yesterday, driving in car from university, road worker waves. I put down window and shake his hand. Not very clean hand, but I feel very happy. One hundred per cent innocent. Only motive sharing human friendship."

Simplicity, happiness, humour and friendship — he pointed to these things. **R**

Alex MacLeod lives in downtown Toronto where he works with young adults at Knox Church (Spadina).

In next month's issue, Alex MacLeod will continue to examine related issues for Christians living in a pluralistic society by interviewing John Stackhouse and reviewing his recent book *Humble Apologetics*.

Creamed by a dairy truck

I wish you could meet Jim and Jean Southworth. They're my kind of people. No one understands better than the Southworths that, no matter how tough things get, there's always light at the end of the tunnel. Even if it's coming from the headlights of a truck.

About 5:30 one morning, Jim, Jean and their three children were sound asleep inside their home on a peaceful residential street in Salem, Oregon. Their eldest son had just poured himself a drink in the kitchen and headed back to bed.

On a nearby hillside, the Curly's Dairy guy rolled his van to a stop for a routine delivery. But when he returned, his mouth dropped open in horror as the van took a turn for the worse. Down the hill it went, backwards and gathering speed. The van jumped a few curbs and took out a maple tree. It flattened some shrubs and toppled a picket fence. Finally, it levelled the Southworths' front porch and crashed to a halt in their darkened kitchen.

"It was like a bomb went off," recalls Jim, a dentist. When Jean saw the mess, she did what any homemaker would do: she cried over a spilt milk truck. But when she saw the slogan on the van staring out at her from the ruins of her kitchen, the tears vanished. Here Comes Curly, it read. And Jean started to laugh.

When the dust settled, Jim talked Curly's out of three gallons of ice cream, though he said he would have preferred a year's worth of milk. Jean wasn't so sure she wanted Curly's delivering anything to her house ever again. After all, the front porch was totalled. The eating nook was toast. And the front door? Well ... no one quite knew where it was.

Insurance covered the \$15,000 dam-

age, and Jim and Jean decided the time was right to do a little renovation. "Our remodeller said we saved on demolition costs," laughs Jean, "although they don't normally use Curly's for that. We're wondering about the poor driver. He's probably in therapy. We hear that Salem customers cower in mock terror at approaching dairy trucks."

When the renovations were complete, Jim and Jean decided to throw a party to celebrate the closing of an open house. They convinced Curly's Dairy to park a truck out front. A handmade sign instructed the driver where to park: Please Park IN FRONT of the House Not INSIDE the House. In the flower beds, another sign read, Danger. Runaway Truck Zone. Through the truck window, a Curly's manager served up eight flavours of ice cream. And in the kitchen, 67 guests gathered to browse through the accident photos.

"When we first heard the crash and saw the crumpled walls of our house that morning," says Jean, "we thought this was the end for all of us. But once we realized we'd only been smashed into by a delivery truck, we calmed down. Our entryway and kitchen nook were destroyed, but our kids were OK. That's what matters. Besides, what good would getting upset do?"

Did they consider a lawsuit? "Never," says Jean. "But we were surprised at how

many wanted us to. It was fun seeing our story on the front page of the newspaper, but we were left wondering why our reaction was considered so unusual as to be newsworthy at all. That's the way it's supposed to be, isn't it? After all, we're Christians. We're supposed to practise love and forgiveness."

Nowadays, people in Salem call Jean the ice cream lady, but she doesn't mind. "Pulitzer Prize winners know what the first line will be in their obituaries," she smiles. "At my funeral, I'm sure somebody will say something about the day we got creamed by a dairy truck."

For the Southworths, life is a looking glass. Frown into it, and it will frown back at you. Laugh with it and you will find it a kindly companion. They believe that, when we live life with thanksgiving, people outside — and inside — the church will notice.

"No matter what happens to us, there's always something to be thankful for," says Jean. "In our case, God protected us. The Curly's truck could have easily come into our bedroom instead of the kitchen that morning. Besides," she laughs, "my husband is a dentist. He's used to filling cavities." **R**

Phil Callaway is the author of a new novel, *Growing Up on the Edge of the World* (Harvest House). Visit him at www.philcallaway.com.



Illustration by Claudio Ghirardo

How to attract the media's attention

Dear Editor:

By now we have a new Moderator of General Assembly, and good luck to him, I say. I have used this space before to raise the point that, as far as newsworthiness is concerned, we have what is easily the most lamentable and flat-out lame way of choosing a moderator.

"Hello? City Desk? Remember that person we elected as our nominee for moderator of our General Assembly back on April 1st? ... Yes, I know, April Fool's ... Never mind that. Well, he's now official. He can talk to you now. When do you want to interview ... Hello? Hello?" (Stealth bombers have nothing on The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Always off the radar.)

Our highest court will have assembled in its general fashion in Oshawa, Ont., during — almost in the middle of — a general election campaign. Will we have extended an invitation to Messrs. Martin, Harper, Layton and even Duceppe to address our nationally representative gathering — as good a demographic cross-section of the Canadian middle as they are likely to find anywhere on the hustings, and all in one place? (Unless it's the time on the agenda for the Loyal Addresses or Motions of Thanks or one or two other agenda soft spots that generally remind people of the need for a coffee or a place to deal with coffee already consumed — in which case, they are not likely to be in one place.)

Of course, Mon. Duceppe would have no reason at all to come. But wouldn't it be one of the surreally fascinating encounters in Canadian history? By the way, I actually know a few Presbyterians who are BQ and PQ party members, but I am sworn to secrecy under the Witness Protection Act.

Alas, I know as I write that this idea

will never cross the threshold of awareness of those who navigate our little coracle — *Note to proofreader: Let them look it up. Proofreader: It was a small, circular boat-like craft, made of leather skins stretched over a frame, designed to propel Welsh and Irish Christian missionaries, zealous in evangelical purpose but short on skills in marine engineering, to distant shores. Columnist: So much for interactive media* — across the stormy seas of postmodern hostility toward what, flattering us, is called "organized" religion.

Stealth bombers have nothing on The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Always off the radar

To be fair, they may be right. When the total number of Canadian Presbyterians who admit to membership amounts to a lesser aggregation than the United Chopsticks, Knitting-Needle and Crochet-Hoop Workers of Canada Union, Local 19, we might expose ourselves to embarrassment and accusations of hubris by extending such an invitation. But what would we have to lose? Our preference for earnest and long-debated motions, duly moved and seconded, that the General Assembly "urges" the federal government to ... be nice?


It is a puzzlement to me, one of many, that those who see a crying need to be "contemporary" in worship exert little or no pressure on the national church to avail itself (a.k.a. "herself" — now too gender specific) to employ "contemporary" tactics in garnering attention. For example, would it not be a seductive photo op to have the new Moderator installed by carrying him/her to the dias/podium/platform in a gilded sedan chair, borne by

ex-moderators? Wait! I have anticipated objections. This would discriminate against the "fitness-challenged," "full-bodied" candidate, man or woman. But we could simply add more ex-moderators or, if they have preceded us into the General Assembly in the Sky, their chaplains, giving them something real to do. And it might give a proactive edge to the younger, lighter and probably female candidates, now compressed under the stained glass ceiling.

And could we not turn our Moderator loose, at least a little bit? Most of them,

whether under the weight of office or the weight of leaden tradition, stumble about the country proclaiming the church to be "in good heart" — though the kidneys, liver and brain might be giving out. They inevitably bring "greetings from the ___th General Assembly" to presbyteries, congregations and convocations when reality dictates they could/should be saying something like: "The national court, no longer in session and therefore an ephemeral figment of your imagination, wonders how, given your abysmal track record, you have the nerve to take up space and, moreover, trouble us with a barrage of idiotic and ill-thought-out overtures."

We are poised on a cusp, and it is a very painful place to poise.



Doing God's work on the frontier of mission

The Presbytery of Peace River

by Tom Dickey

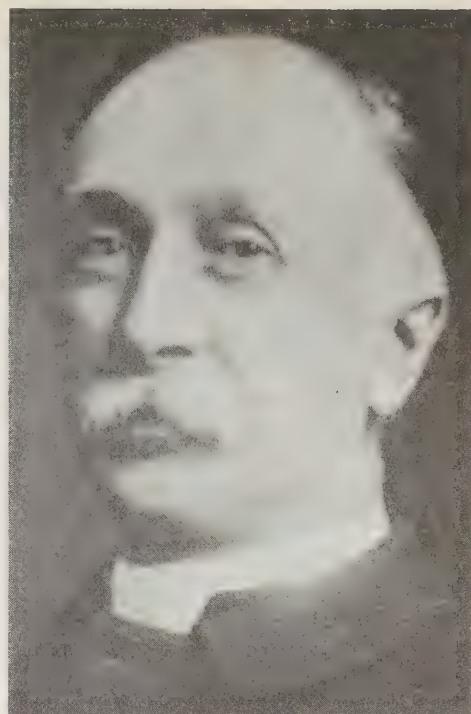
Take an area 1,200 miles long by 300 miles wide, sprinkle it with hamlets and homesteads, mark in some mountains, lakes and rivers, and you have the Peace River presbytery, the northern frontier of our church." So wrote former editor Rev. Dr. Decourcy H. Rayner in an article entitled *Frontier Presbytery* in the January 1964 *Presbyterian Record*.

On the surface, it would appear little has changed in the Presbytery of Peace River since the late Dr. Rayner sat down at his Smith-Corona to hammer out his story. There were eight pastoral charges and 15 congregations in 1964; today, there are eight charges and nine congregations. There were 400-plus communicant members in 1964; currently, there are closer to 300. And for many Presbyterians, who picture themselves as Alexander Mackenzie or Simon Fraser when they head off to a shopping mall 10 kilometres away, the adjective "frontier" still applies. What better way to describe a presbytery whose northern boundary runs along the 60th parallel? Makes you cold just thinking about it, doesn't it. Within the presbytery's bounds lies much of northeastern British Columbia, northwestern Alberta and all of the Yukon Territory.

The Presbyterian Church first began work in the Peace Country when settlers arrived at the turn of the 20th century. In 1903, the Presbytery of Edmonton established the Peace River Mission, with Rev. Robert Simpson of Brookline, Ont., as missionary. Mr. Simpson established a congregation of three families at Pouce Coupe, but work came to a standstill when he flew the Coupe two years later.

In 1909, Rev. Alexander Forbes, convener of the home missions committee of the Presbytery of Edmonton, and his wife, Agnes, spent two months travelling into the heart of the Peace River district, covering a total of 1,000 miles by team and 300 miles by water. It certainly must have felt like the frontier to them. When they arrived in Grande Prairie, for example, there were only three non-Native women present (which must have made forming a WMS group difficult).

When Mr. Forbes returned to Edmonton, he urged the presbytery to get involved in work in the Peace River district again. When no suitable candidates for the job could be found (perhaps, a case of everyone else taking one step backwards when volunteers were asked to step forward), he offered to go as the ordained missionary in charge of work on the frontier. The church prospered mightily under Mr. Forbes. Forbes Church, Grande Prairie, Alta., the largest congregation in the presbytery, stands as a reminder of his work.



The church in the Peace River district prospered under Rev. Alexander Forbes.

At the request of the Presbytery of Edmonton in 1920, the General Assembly created the Presbytery of Peace River. But only God could have created the rugged and beautiful landscape that made serving its vast pastoral charges so difficult.

History and tradition seem to have held little sentimental value for the sturdy, practical pioneers who settled in the presbytery. All the Presbyterian churches — six charges and six mission fields consisting of 171 members — voted in favour of Union with the Methodists and Congregationalists in 1925.

The continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada, however, wasted little time in re-establishing work in the presbytery. Two students who were sent to the field



Strang Church, Dixonville, Alta.

Photo by Heather Chappell

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in the summer of 1928 were apparently willing to do their part to help Presbyterians multiply. Included in a report to General Assembly was this minor complaint: "With a student, or one who has not the authority to marry people, our work is in a measure handicapped."

For years, the pattern would be for the OMs (ordained missionaries) to come to the presbytery, serve their two-year appointments and then head south. Over the past couple of decades, however, ministers have been inclined to stick around a bit longer and enjoy the Peace-full life.

The presbytery may not have multiplied over the years, but it is doing its best to hang in. Of the nine congregations, two are vacant and the rest are served by four ordained ministers, one lay minister (Fort St. John, B.C.) and an Anglican priest (Chetwynd Shared Ministry, B.C.). Five of the presbytery's eight charges are receiving grants from the national church. Only one is self-supporting. Of the other two, one currently has no active ministry (Church of the Apostles, Faro, Yukon); the other is vacant (St. Peter's, Hudson's Hope, B.C.).

The most recent development in the presbytery began in 1998 with the creation of the North Peace Territorial Ministry, based in Strang Church, Dixonville, Alta. Incidentally, if you are wondering where a church picked up the name Strang, it honours Dr. Margaret Strang, a well-known medical missionary who came to the presbytery in 1931.

Although a meeting of the Presbytery of Peace River is smaller than some presbytery committees, it involves an active group of people who assume leadership roles at all levels of the church. It tries to deal with the various matters that come from General Assembly as well as being actively involved in the life of the congregations. The congregations continue to work hard to minister in their communities, reaching out in as many ways as possible.

We'll leave the last word to Dr. Rayner: "This, then, is a sketchy survey of the work in our frontier presbytery. It owes much to devoted lay members, both men and women, who have refused to be discouraged by small congregations and have given generously of themselves and their means." **R**

God's grace has consequences

The heap of garbage became a man

The corner of two of the city's main streets on one of those hot summer evenings. To my left is a restaurant with a large pile of garbage bags outside. Because of the heat and decaying food in the bags, the smell is awful. I move away. As I do, though, I see movement. Then one of the bags tips forward. A street person has found a safe sleep by hiding against a wall, surrounded by bags of garbage.

The man climbs out of the heap, shakes his head and begins to walk in my direction. He is tiny, a shaking mess and mass of skin and bones. There are open, weeping sores on his face, his clothes are so ripped I can almost see his genitalia, and he stinks of body waste. He comes up to me and in a quiet, frightened voice asks me a question.

"Could you, could you, could you spare some money?"

I turn around to answer him, and this very gesture of contact makes him shrink back farther into his hiding place. I respond by asking him a particularly stupid question. I ask if he is hungry.

He says he is. I tell him I'll buy him some food. As I begin to walk to the corner store a few yards away, I realize he is following me. Of course he is. As I would in such a situation. He does so because he doesn't trust me. People lie to him all the time, and he's hungry and wants this promised food.

As he walks, he trembles and chatters. And stinks. The sickening odour of urine, muck and decay. I'm uncomfortable, embarrassed. I don't know what to say, what to do. People are looking around when they smell him, and they're looking at me! Guess what, it's my problem and not his.

We walk into the store. Me with good clothes and good job. He with ripped pants and nothing.

I take some milk, peanuts — any food that looks vaguely nourishing. I walk to the counter. He follows. I put the goods down and wait to pay.

The woman working in the store looks pained. There is a tin of fresh-air spray underneath the counter, used after street people come into the store to

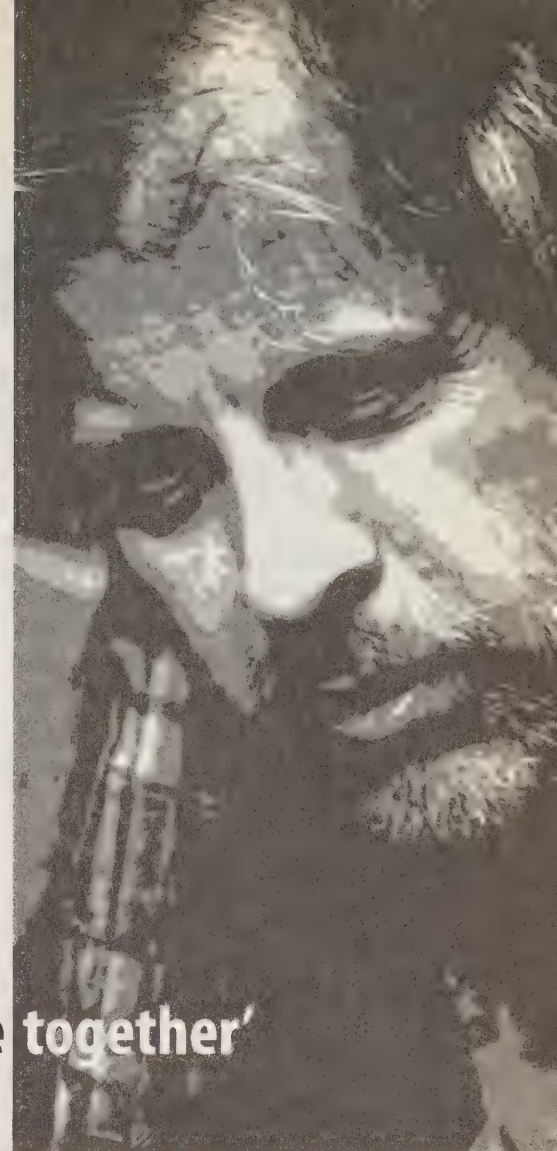
'Yes, we are together'

expunge the smell. I don't blame her. I may do the same. She looks at me. Then at him. Then at me. Then again at him. Then at me again. She seems bewildered, even nervous. A pause, and then: "Are you two, are you, are you together? Are you together?"

She was asking, of course, if I was paying for this man who looked as though he had not seen money in a very long time. Were we together? Was I together with this man? Were we together? A very sensible and easy question.

It seemed to take an eternity for the question to register. Only a second of course. But it was as if the whole world and all of its possibilities suddenly flushed and flashed though my mind. I steadied myself. "Yes," I say, "we are together."

Now some of you may be expecting me to say that I spoke to the man, told him about Jesus, read him some spiritual laws and that he's now an accountant living in the suburbs. Didn't happen. I don't know what eventually happened to him — don't know whether he is now dead or alive. Frankly, it could be the former. But



I do know what happened to me and what is still happening.

The day will come when I will stand broken, smashed and stinking. The stench will be my own sin. The question will be asked, "Are you two together?" Because of my faith in Jesus Christ, because of my certainty that he lived, died and rose again for me and for all of us, the answer will be in the affirmative.

"Yes," Yeshua will say. "Yes, we are together." And I will have eternal happiness with my Father in heaven.

What, though, of that man? My guarantee of salvation demands certain things from me. Including the realization that, but for the grace of God, I could have been that man living in the garbage. God's grace to me also demands that I do all I can to rectify the situation, and remind a frequently uncaring world that we are all princes. **R**

Michael Coren is a broadcaster, author and speaker. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com.

Purple martin purgatory

I flap my fool feathers right off trying to satisfy my compulsion to serve everyone

by David Webber

“Have you seen the binoculars?” I squinted at Linda and began to rummage impatiently through the closet. She looked up from her book and scowled over the top of her reading half-glasses with one of her sexy school-marm expressions that I love. “I can’t seem to find them anywhere in here.”

“They’re right there on the counter,” Linda said. “How come you can’t find anything in a 12-foot travel trailer even when it’s right out in the open? What do you need the binoculars for anyway? If you are going to the outhouse, you need the newspaper.”

“Well, I was on the way to the outhouse but I kinda got waylaid by this weird bird down by the lake, so I came back for the binoculars.”

“Everything is weird to you, or at least you see everything in weird ways. But I’ll bite, what kind of bird was it?”

“I don’t rightly know,” I mused. “It was about the size of a robin with kind of royal purple feathers on its back. It was flying straight up in the air like it was propelled with a rocket on its backside. I reckon it must have been a regally robed rocket robin reproduction.” (I spoke with obvious deep thought and conviction.)

Linda gave me her seductive school-marm scowl again. “Boy, you guys who think you can write will stoop to the lowest level just to try out an alliteration. Go to the outhouse, David, take the bird book with you to read and the binoculars to check out your bird on the way back, and don’t mix up the order.”

I frowned, took the binoculars from the counter and the bird book she offered me before heading out back to the backhouse ... or was it back out to the outhouse? (Don’t you just love the latter stages of middle-age memory loss?)



Photo by Patricia Velte

The trip was fruitful. I discovered that my rocketing robin was really a swooping swallow, commonly known as the purple martin (*Progne subis*). The bird book described the purple martin as our largest swallow and then went on at some length about its distinct forked tail, its cute beak with jaunty overbite, its glossy dark purple back and wings, its greyish white belly and its distinctive chirping voice.

Finishing the paperwork, I closed the book, closed the outhouse and commenced my best stealthy-swooping-swallow-sneak-attack. (I just can’t help myself when my wife is not on alliteration alert.)

I found the robin-sized purple martin still doing rocket imitations at the edge

of the lake. It sat for the briefest of moments in a low willow bush and stared intently directly up. Then, suddenly, it flew straight up in the air to the very top of the towering pines on the lakeshore and snagged a moth out of the air that was lollygaging, lazily looking for love. Moth in beak, the purple martin power-dived back to earth, this time to a thicker willow shrub several metres down the lakeshore from me. It disappeared into the thick shrubbery for a moment and then flew back to its willow outpost beside my observation station.

In about five minutes, the purple martin repeated the whole production about 15 times. I was getting exhausted just watching. I decided to sneak farther down the lakeshore and find out what

was in the thick willows that was compelling the purple martin to flap its fool feathers off. I found six young and loud purple martins — fully fledged, adult-sized and obviously out of the nest for weeks. A couple of them spooked out of the willow shrub and demonstrated flight capacity clearly as good as their parent.

I sat down amazed as the two young martins returned to roost. The adult bird continued its parental purgatory. It didn't seem to bother her that I was sitting almost in the midst of her greedy, squawking, lazy brood. She was so bound to serve her brood of six she seemed oblivious to me. I fully expected her to start stuffing me with moths, such was the level of her compulsion to serve every open mouth.

As I sat there and watched the purple martin play itself out, a weird feeling crept up and over me. It was almost as if I were watching myself. I knew her compulsion but, for me, it was religious.

In all my years in the church, I must confess I have experienced a kind of purple martin purgatory. When I first accepted Christ and was baptized, my pastor at the time seemed to operate under the philosophy of use them or lose them. I was still wet behind the ears when I was drafted as a youth leader and Linda as a Sunday school teacher. We were already hosting the congregation's midweek Bible study. Weeks (not months) passed and I was propped up in front of our small congregation giving a Sunday morning meditation. A few more months and I was elected an elder. The next summer, Linda and I were conscripted by yet another well-meaning pastor to direct our denomination's regional summer camp for six- to 12-year-old kids and to lead vacation Bible schools in three congregations. I also filled in as pulpit supply in the same congregations for three months that summer to provide for the pastor's holidays and study leave. How I found time to hold down a regular job and be healed from the cancer that racked my body during the same period is still a mystery to me. In those first years in the church, and in the quarter century since, there was a small voice going off inside me: "Leave me alone. I just came here to pray."

I wish I were an anomaly, a victim of my own stupidity. But the reality is, as

numbers wane and program requirements blossom in the church, purple martin purgatory is what many of us experience. It's not only pastors and the leadership of the church stuck in this compulsion. It is what the church has become. As music and programs and various forms of ministry become more and more complex, as the church shoulders in on the marketplace to compete for people's free time, as the church joins with schools and hospitals and others of society's institutions to invest great amounts of time and energy to cover its legal butt, purple martin purgatory expands its numbers exponentially. All of this stuff consumes time, and time is people. Does anyone remember that we just came here to pray?

The purple martin and its parental purgatory remind me the bottom line is this: "You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God ..." (Deuteronomy 10:20-21a). The bottom line for me and for the church is an exclusive God-focus. The only compulsion in the church and in my life is supposed to be God and a relationship with him. Both the Torah and the Christ make it absolutely clear that even the love of neighbour is totally secondary to the love of God. Compulsively serving a program-driven institution has to be way down the list. If I don't have that straight (and I usually don't) and if I don't take a stand to enlighten people in the church who don't have it straight as they hunt for my time to prop up yet another institutional corner (and I usually don't), I am going to burn out in purple martin purgatory. I will flap my fool feathers right off my angel wings trying to satisfy my compulsion to serve everyone, when all God expects is that I love and serve him.

After all is said and done, God welcomed me into his family primarily to pray. After all is said and done, the church is meant to be primarily a house of prayer. And you know what, that is a liberating summer thought, at least for me. **R**

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter's Aspen: Embracing the Creator's Fire*.

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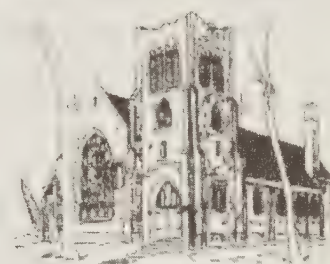
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Cultivating awareness of God through spirituality centres

Surely God is in this place

by Laura Alary

In one episode of the story of Jacob recounted in Genesis, Jacob is alone in the wilderness, preparing to set up camp for the night. For some time, he has been running from an ugly family conflict. Now his body is weary from tension and his mind is crowded with messy fragments of thoughts: bad memories, old grudges, guilty secrets, present worries, future schemes and plans. As Jacob stretches out on the ground and rests his head on a flat stone, he hopes to escape into sleep, leaving his troubles behind for a while. Instead, he dreams — and such dreams! Jacob has a vision of an enormous staircase connecting Heaven and Earth, with angels going up and down on it. When he awakens, Jacob gazes around in amazement at his ordinary-looking surroundings. “Surely,” he exclaims, “the Lord is in this place and I was not aware of it!”

Awareness of God seldom comes naturally. As much as we yearn to recognize God, our sensitivity to the divine presence is often dulled by mental clutter, anxiety, fatigue and noise. Often it is only in moments of stillness that we are able to discern the stirrings of the Spirit in and around us. One way of carving out time and space for God is through a spirituality centre — a place set apart for quiet reflection, creative expression and the practice of traditional Christian spiritual disciplines such as meditation, reading Scripture and prayer.

Touring a spirituality centre

Imagine you are approaching the doorway to a large room. At the entrance, there is a small table. On it stands a single candle and a sign welcoming



Photo by Ian MacCreedy

Prayer can be expressed through the work of the hands.

you. As you pass through the door, you are greeted by the sound of gentle instrumental music and the aroma of bread baking. On a table nearby, baskets filled with chunks of fresh bread are surrounded by biblical passages describing the smells and tastes of worship: sweet clouds of incense, smoke rising from burnt offerings, the bitterness of Passover herbs. Questions posted on cards encourage you to recall your own memories: the heavy fragrance of Easter lilies, the tang of evergreen boughs at Christmas, the damp smell of the woods or the smoke of a campfire at an outdoor service, hot wax dripping from candles, the

musty odour of an old Sunday school room, furniture polish on wooden pews, the taste of bread and wine. Reminded that worship is a sensory experience as well as an intellectual one, you walk farther into the spirituality centre.

Set apart in one corner of the room are several tables draped in colourful fabric and decorated with candles. On one table sits a stack of Bibles and an assortment of cards printed with simple instructions. In the background, the gentle gurgling of a fountain provides an audible reminder of the cleansing and renewing power of God represented by the waters of baptism.

Seated in chairs around the tables, or

reclining on small rugs on the floor, a few people are reading and praying. They are engaged in two ancient Christian spiritual disciplines: *lectio divina* and contemplative prayer. *Lectio divina*, or sacred reading, consists of reading a single biblical passage over and over again, slowly and prayerfully, seeking to enter imaginatively into the world of the text. Contemplative prayer involves repeating a single phrase and allowing its rhythm to help the mind and heart focus on God.

At some long tables near the centre of the room, people are expressing their prayers through the work of their hands. Some are painting with watercolours: one person puts on paper the images that have come to her during her meditation on a Scripture passage, another gives shape to her joyful praise through splashes of bright colour, yet another offers his grief and anger to God through a wordless prayer of sombre brush strokes. At another table, someone has finished reading the passage from Galatians in which Paul speaks about the fruit of the

Awareness of God seldom comes naturally

Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Now she uses colourful clay to make beads representing each one. When she leaves, she will take the beads with her as a reminder of the distinctive characteristics of the Spirit-filled life.

Nearby, another group is cutting and sewing together card stock and coloured paper. They are making journals to help them cultivate the habit of paying attention to God. On their work table, a sign explains not only how to make a journal but also how to use it. Pause at the end of each day, the instructions explain, and spend 10 minutes asking yourself: where did I encounter God today? what opportunities did I take to share the love of Christ with another person? what opportunities did I miss? what could I do differently in order to reflect the love of God more faithfully?

In another corner of the room, someone sits at a desk, writing. She has been looking through binders filled with stor-

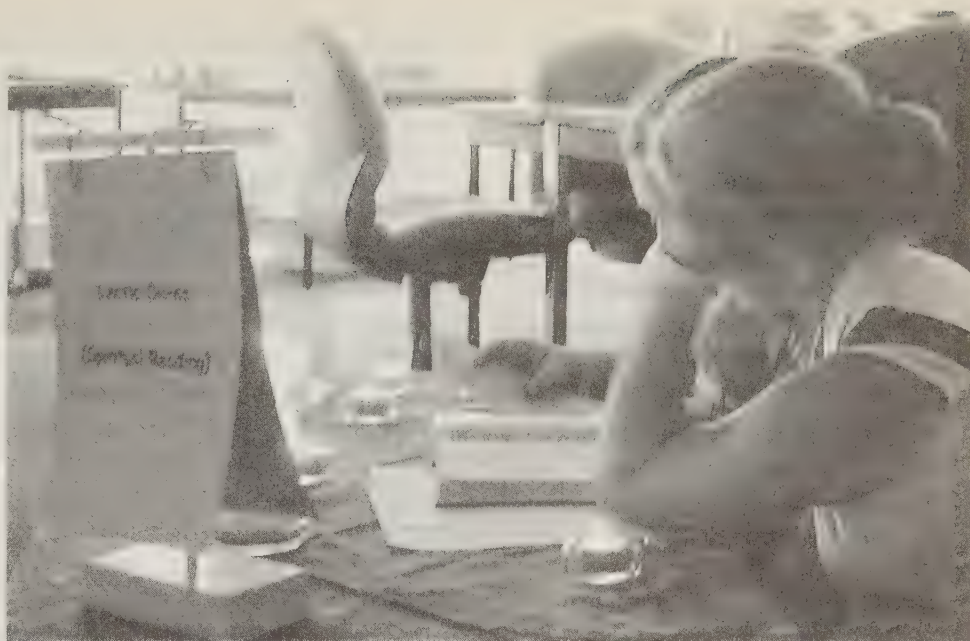


Photo by Ian MacCready

Lectio divina (sacred reading) helps the reader enter into the world of the text.

ies and photographs of the church's mission and ministry in Canada and abroad. Now she is writing a letter to one of the overseas staff, thanking him for his work and pledging to pray for his particular ministry. She is also beginning to consider how she might serve God locally through her own congregation.

Along one wall, a small cluster of people gathers. They are writing on brightly coloured Post-it Notes, sticking them to the wall, then stopping to read what others have written. This is the prayer wall, the place where the prayers of individuals become the prayers of the community. Each colour represents a different type of prayer: praise, thanksgiving, intercession, petition, lament and confession. Colour-coded signs explain the purpose of each. Close by, someone is reading the Psalms, looking for biblical examples of these types of prayer. When he finishes, he spends some time writing his own psalm based on these biblical models. When he leaves the centre, perhaps he will carry not only a deeper awareness of the range of emotions expressed in the biblical Psalter but also a new freedom and honesty in his own conversations with God.

In a separate room, a few people are walking the labyrinth. The labyrinth — a single path laid out in a complex circular pattern — was used in the Middle Ages to represent pilgrimage, the journey of the Christian toward both the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. In recent years, it

has been reclaimed as a tool for prayer and discernment. As they follow its winding path in toward the centre and outward again, those who walk the labyrinth enter more deeply into the biblical metaphor of life as a way or path that one treads, guided and accompanied by God.

By inviting people to explore these various stations, the spirituality centre serves as a teaching tool. It introduces participants to spiritual disciplines that may help them cultivate the habit of paying attention to the work of the Spirit within and through them.

Possibilities for putting spirituality centres to work

Spirituality centres can be as large or small as space permits, as simple or elaborate as time and resources allow. They can be temporary or permanent and, with some creativity, may be adapted to suit a range of ages and abilities.

On a large scale, they work well at conferences for youth and adults. At events such as Presbyterian Youth Triennium 2001 and Canada Youth 2003, the annual meeting of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), participants flocked to spirituality centres looking for an opportunity to balance a busy conference schedule with time for silence and reflection.

Spirituality centres are also appropriate for congregations. Last year, on the first Sunday in Lent, our worship time at

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Questions for reflection and discussion

- Do you regularly practise any spiritual disciplines? Why or why not?
- Writer Richard Foster likens the practice of spiritual disciplines to preparing soil to receive seeds for planting. Although we cannot force the Holy Spirit to act, we must create in ourselves the right conditions to receive the Spirit's influence. What is helpful about this analogy? Is there anything about it with which you disagree? Is spiritual health and growth the product of our disciplined effort or the grace of God, or some combination of the two?
- What role might a spirituality centre play in the life of your congregation? Who might benefit from it? How could the concept be adapted for your setting?

For further reading

Anne Broyles, Beverly Burton, Ken Carter et. al., *Soul Tending: Life-Forming Practices for Older Youth and Young Adults* (Abingdon, 2002).

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th Anniversary Edition (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Westminster John Knox, 1995).

James Bryan Smith, *A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

For some descriptions of *lectio divina* and contemplative prayer, consult the youth ministry section of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) website:
www.pcusa.org/youthministry/spirituality.htm.

Beaches Church, Toronto, was devoted to a self-guided exploration of various stations set up the night before in rooms around the church building. Another possibility would be to plan an intergenerational potluck supper followed by an evening spent together in the spirituality centre. A colleague who served as a chaplain in a nursing home developed a simple rotational model to introduce residents to a new discipline each week. Small centres can also be the focus of weekend retreats.

Elements of a spirituality centre can also be used one at a time. Members of a youth group might spend an evening making and learning how to use spiritual journals. A small group Bible study could set aside one meeting to practise *lectio divina* together. A Sunday school class might respond to biblical passages through art or music. The prayer wall could become a regular part of congregational life. Some churches have used the labyrinth as a form of outreach, issuing an open invitation to people from the surrounding community to come in and spend an afternoon or evening becoming acquainted with this ancient form of prayer and meditation.

Becoming like Christ

We live in a climate of spiritual hunger and curiosity. As popular interest in spirituality grows, it is more important than ever for the church to articulate clearly

the characteristic features of the Christian spiritual life. Above all, the church must emphasize the central role of the Spirit, whose work involves transforming the people of God into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). In other words, maturing spiritually as a Christian means becoming more like Christ. Remembering this helps guard against the tendency toward self-centredness that marks some forms of contemporary spirituality.

If designed carefully to reflect the principles of Reformed theology and Christian spirituality, a spirituality centre can be a wonderful way of encouraging Presbyterians to become acquainted with aspects of the Christian tradition that foster spiritual health and maturity and a lively awareness of the presence of God.

As in Jacob's story, awareness is a gift from God, whose grace punctures the barrier of human inattentiveness. Spirituality centres are places for work and disciplined exploration. But above all, they are places of grace where, in stillness and quiet, we may become aware of God and find ourselves dreaming surprising things. ■

Laura Alary, a graduate of Knox College, attends Beaches Church, Toronto. She recently received her PhD in New Testament from the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto.

Check the Year of Spirituality website, which is updated biweekly:
www.presbyterian.ca/flames/spirituality

obituaries

Cooper, Reginald, died March 30, 2004. A long-time member of the temporal board, congregation life committee and faithful elder of Erskine Church, Ottawa.

Cunningham, Rev. Gordon, 82, died April 13, 2004. Gordon was ordained in 1947. During his 42 years in ministry, he served congregations in The Pas, Man., Regina, Sask., and Rocky Mountain House, Alta. After retirement, Gordon continued to minister in Red Deer and Orkney, Alta. He is survived by wife Anna, children and grandchildren.

Fortier, Paul D., July 21, 1947 - May 3, 2004. Faithful member and elder of L'Eglise des Canton de L'Est as well as L'Eglise St. Paul and St. Andrew, Melbourne, Que. Sadly missed by family and friends.

Hamilton, Roy Alguire, died peacefully on Wed., April 28, 2004, at Lakeridge Health, Whitby, Ont., at age 95. Roy was ordained as an elder at Knox Church, Oshawa, Ont., in 1941. He also served on sessions of St. Paul's, Oshawa, St. Giles, Calgary, St. Andrew's, Islington, Rexdale, Etobicoke. He was national director of Presbyterian Men 1957-1977. He organized the Presbyterian Men's Chorus of Central Ontario in 1972.

Kennedy, Rev. Samuel John, passed away after a lifetime of adventure in God's service on Mon., March 15, 2004, in St. Catharines, Ont., surrounded by his family. He was predeceased in 1989 by his beloved wife of 44 years, Anna Maria McBride. Samuel was a loving father to Graham (Catharine), Trevor (Susanne), Laurence (predeceased in India, 1952) and proud grandfather of Jane, Rachel (Matthew McKay), Alison, Jean-Michel and Laura.

Samuel was born in County Antrim on June 29, 1915. The call to be a missionary in India necessitated rigorous study toward entrance exams at Trinity College, Dublin, and then Assembly's College in Belfast. He was ordained in First Church, Ahoghill, in 1941. His appointment to India was subject to WWII and led to service with the YMCA in Iceland, Nigeria then an opening in Calcutta and the beginning of mission work in Gujarat with the Irish Presbyterian Mission. After 12 years in India, Samuel and Anna accepted an appointment with the mission board of the PCC at Whitewood and Broadview in Saskatchewan in 1956. In 1960, the Kennedys were called to Knox Church (latterly, St. Andrew's), Fort Frances, Ont., for a memorable and rewarding pastorate of 18 years. In 1978, they moved to St. Paul's, Kemptville, where he finished his ministry near their grandchildren in Ottawa.

Samuel is remembered in India for church-building skills, including architecture and masonry. He was noted for the warmth and pastoral care of his people, the beauty and language of his prayers, the sensitivity and depth of his sermons and the respect he showed to

others. A funeral service was held at his home church in Canada, St. Paul's, Kemptville, with various family members participating.

"In his will is your strength; in his will is your peace; in his will, our salvation." (S.J.K.)

MacSween, Rev. Ian, 87, beloved husband of Billie, passed away to a better world on March 16, 2004. In his 40 years in ministry, he tenderly cared for the congregations of Memorial, Sylvan Lake, and Strathcona, Edmonton. Upon retirement, he resided in Red Deer near his children and adored grandchildren.

Smith, Rev. Earl, passed away at the age of 90 on Mon., April 19, 2004, in Kemptville, Ont. His wife, Marjorie, predeceased him on Feb. 29, 2004. Earl graduated from Presbyterian College in 1947. He served his OM appointment at Robert Campbell Memorial Church in the Presbytery of Montreal. Earl then served at various churches in Ontario (St. Andrew's, Hespler, 1948; First, Brockville, 1953; Runnymede, Toronto, 1962; Park Lawn, Toronto, 1965).

Earl and Marjorie retired in Brockville. Earl shared his love and gift of music by playing the piano during worship at various churches in the area. He is fondly remembered and appreciated by many whose lives he touched. He was a true gentleman and a man of great faith who was ready "to go home." Earl was surrounded by his children, Marjorie Lou Barati (Chicago) and Michael Dean Smith (Langley, B.C.), at the time of his death.

Smith, James Edwin (Ted), suddenly in his 93rd year following emergency surgery on Mon., April 19, 2004, at Scarborough Grace Hospital. Husband of Margaret Burns, son of James Smith and Etta Gibbons (all deceased), father of Katharine and James (Cheryl), grandfather of Althea and Michelle Smith, brother of Edith Fensham, uncle to Linda Speers (Griff) and grandpa to Robin Miller and Ciera and Ryan Gautreau.

Ted was born in Southampton, Ont., and achieved distinction in many fields: served overseas, rose to lieutenant colonel and commanding officer of 113 Manning Depot in militia; career educator, principal, teaching college master, assistant superintendent Ministry of Education; honoured with William Mercer Wilson Medal for achievements as a Mason for over 70 years; active elder in Presbyterian Church for over 30 years, leading its Second Century Advance national campaign. As active as he was, Ted nonetheless made sure that he had time to assist others and enjoy fellowship with them — especially his family. He had a deep respect for the world around him, which was, in turn, returned to him. It has been said that, whenever Ted spoke at a gathering, "you could be assured of receiving a thoughtful and well-considered opinion."

Spooner, Margaret, 87, a member of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

Strang, Margaret, dedicated member of Caven, Exeter, Ont., very active in all levels of WMS, died Feb. 19, 2004. Margaret lived her life in the service of Jesus Christ.

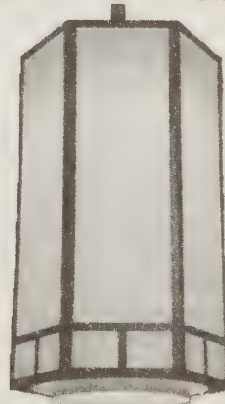
Tetrault, Sharon Heather, 48, a member of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

Tucker, Douglas A., 68, long-time faithful member, elder, clerk of session, treasurer, University Church, Downsview, Ont.; elder, St. Andrew's, Maple, Ont.; a past committee convener in West Toronto presbytery. Passed away peacefully with his family by his side after a long courageous battle with cancer, Sun., Feb., 22, 2004, in St. Joseph's Health Centre, Toronto. Loving husband of Dorothy. Proud and dedicated father of Nancy (Ken), Dwight (Dawna), Drew (Nancy), Brent (Brynn). Loving grandfather (Pa) to Lindsay, Aaryn and Isaak. This good and faithful servant will be fondly remembered by all who knew him. Interment in Coldwater Cemetery, Coldwater, Ont.

Vanderwal, Rev. Jacob, June 5, 1914 - April 17, 2004. After a fulfilled life, Jake was allowed to meet his Maker with dignity in a Cornwall, Ont., hospital. Well until his end, he fell. He did not survive the anaesthetic used during the operation. Two of his children, with him at the time of his passing, were fortunate enough to witness their father's best sermon he ever preached. This sermon was translated through the smile on his face as he was crossing over and the light of his Saviour that radiated from him. He is at peace.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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Eastern Charlotte pastoral charge, NB (St. George; Pennfield). Rev. Dr. Paul Brown, 117 Germain St., Saint John, NB E2L 2E9; 506-634-1760; pbrown@biblesociety.ca.

Fredericton, St. Andrew's (youth and families ministry). Rev. Douglas Blaikie, 512 Charlotte St., Fredericton, NB E3B 1M2; 506-455-8220; minister@sapc.ca.

Hunter River, PEI; Glasgow Road; Brookfield. Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson, PO Box 275, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7K4; stapmath@eastlink.com.

Lunenburg, NS, St. Andrew's; Rose Bay, St. Andrew's. Rev. L. George Macdonald, 6357 London St., Halifax, NS B3L 1X2; 902-454-5253; lgmacdonald@ns.sympatico.ca.

Murray Harbour North pastoral charge, PEI (Murray Harbour North; Murray Harbour South; Peter's Road; Caledonia). Rev. Roger MacPhee, Belfast PO, Belfast, PEI C0A 1A0; 902-659-2703; rkmacphee@pei.sympatico.ca.

St. Andrew's By-The-Sea, NB, Greenock; St. Stephen, St. Stephen's. Rev. Douglas Blaikie, 35 Crown Ave., New Maryland, NB E3C 1E1; minister@sapc.ca.

Truro, NS, St. James; McClure's Mills, St. Paul's. Rev. Laurence Mawhinney, PO Box 1972, Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0; dlmawhinney@eastlink.ca.

Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario

Kars, ON, St. Andrew's (part-time). Rev. Sam Livingstone, Box 219, Kars, ON K0A 2E0; samshar2@aol.com.

Montreal, Chinese. Rev. J.S.S. Armour, 101 Creswell Dr., Beaconsfield, QC H9W 1E1; 514-426-4688; jss@magma.ca.

Orleans (City of Ottawa), ON, Grace. Rev. Jack Archibald, 971 Woodroffe Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 3G9; 613-729-3384; office@st.paulspc.com.

Ottawa, Knox. Rev. William Ball, 470 Roosevelt Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 1Z6; 613-722-1144; wball@magma.ca.

Ottawa, St. Andrew's (minister of Christian development). Rev. Charlene Wilson, 579 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 4K1; jcwilson@magma.ca.

Pincourt, QC, Ile Perrot. David Morris, Convener, Search Committee, 242 Fifth Ave., Pincourt, QC J7V 5L3; 514-453-4378; dafydd.rich@sympatico.ca.

Smiths Falls, ON, Westminster. Rev. Larry Paul, 17 McLean Blvd., Perth, ON K7H 2Z2; 613-267-7759; paul@superaje.com.

Synod of Toronto and Kingston

Aurora, St. Andrew's. Rev. Theodore Olson, 244 Harrygan Cres., Richmond Hill, ON L4C 4J1; 905-770-1509; ycissols@yorku.ca.

Bobcaygeon, Knox; Rosedale. Rev. Rod Lewis, Box 867, Fenelon Falls, ON K0M 1N0; 705-887-3901; rolewis@quicklinks.on.ca.

Campbellford, St. Andrew's; Burnbrae, St. Andrew's. Rev. Dr. Don Freeman, 272 Lilly Lake Rd., RR 2, Peterborough, ON K9J 6X3; 705-749-3290; donafreeman@hotmail.com.

Collingwood, First. Rev. Dr. A.R. Neal Mathers, Box 12, Nottawa, ON L0M 1P0; 705-444-6823; arnmat@bconnex.net.

Guelph, Westminster St. Paul's. Rev. Jeff Veenstra, 73 Queen St. E, Cambridge, ON N3C 2A9; jeff.veenstra@sympatico.ca.

Hillsburgh, St. Andrew's. Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; tweedsmuirpresbyterian@bellnet.ca.

Ivy, Ivy Church; Barrie, Essa Road; (three-quarters time). Rev. Patrick Voo, 8 Margaret St., Angus, ON L0M 1B0; 705-424-6118; zionangus@aol.com; www.ivypreschurch.com.

Lakefield, St. Andrew's; Lakehurst, Knox. Rev. William Baird, 68 Lang Rd., RR 3, Keene, ON K0L 2G0; Tel/Fax 705-295-6874.

Lindsay, St. Andrew's (senior team minister). Rev. Dawn Griffiths, 45 Bond St., Lindsay, ON K9V 3P9; 705-324-5992; db.griffiths@sympatico.ca.

Markham, Chinese (church worker, Cantonese-speaking, one-year contract). Rev. Samuel Priestly, 143 Main St. N, Markham, ON L3P 1Y2.

Mississauga, Clarkson Road. Rev. Sean J. Foster, 156 Third Line, Oakville, ON L6L 3Z8; 905-827-3851; sean@hopedalechurch.ca.

Palmerston, Knox; Drayton, Knox. Rev. Dr. Brice L. Martin, 190 Tucker St., Box 159, Arthur, ON N0G 1A0; bricelmartin@yahoo.com.

Scarborough, Knox (Agincourt). Rev. Dr. Ian Clark, 5 Ruddell Pl., Toronto, ON M1C 3E4; ian.clark@utoronto.ca.

Scarborough, St. David's. Rev. Everett Briard, 255 Wright Cres., Ajax, ON L1S 5S5; ebriard@rogers.com.

Scarborough, St. Stephen's. Rev. Wayne Kleinstuber, 1301 Neilson Rd., Scarborough, ON M1B 3C2.

Schomberg, Emmanuel (half-time). Rev. Barry Van Dusen, 5750 King Rd., PO Box 535, Nobleton, ON L0G 1N0; 905-859-0843; barry.peggy.vandusen@sympatico.ca.

Stouffville, St. James. Rev. Laura Duggan, 484 Water St., Newmarket, ON L3Y 1M5; 905-895-5512; duggan@on.aibn.com.

Toronto, Rexdale (two-thirds time). Rev. George Anderson, 3819 Bloor St. W, Toronto, ON M9B 1K7; george@standrewsislington.org.

Toronto, Riverdale. Rev. Cameron Brett, 75 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; cbrett@standrewstoronto.org.

Toronto, Runnymede. Rev. Marion Schaffer,

680 Annette, St., Toronto, ON M6S 2C3; marion_schaffer@yahoo.com.

Toronto, St. Andrew's. Rev. Garth Wilson, 155 Wychwood Ave., Toronto, ON M6C 2T1.

Toronto, University Church. Rev. Bryn MacPhail, 15 Lambeth Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9A 2Y6; bryn@reformedtheology.ca.

Toronto, Westview. Rev. Hugh T. Donnelly, 65 Glen Manor Dr., Toronto, ON M4E 3V3; hugh@beacheschurch.org and/or Rev. Dr. Jan McIntyre, 152 Floyd Ave., Toronto, ON M4K 2B7; janiceronald@rogers.com.

Wasaga Beach, Wasaga Beach Community. Rev. Craig Cook, 9 Lindsay Cres., Orillia, ON L3V 7G2; lightsem@sprint.ca.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Atwood, Atwood Church. Rev. Lillian Wilton, 68 Main St., Exeter, ON N0M 1S1; 519-235-2784; caven@tcc.on.ca.

Bluevale, Knox; Belmore, Knox. Rev. Dr. Ken Oakes, PO Box 83, Chesley, ON N0G 1L0; 519-363-5050; kioakes@hotmail.com.

Brantford, Knox; Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Pleasant Church. Rev. Donald N. Young, 11 White Oaks Ave., Brantford, ON N3R 5N8; greenbrier@bfree.on.ca.

Chatham, St. James. Rev. David Heath, 251 Duncan St., Wallaceburg, ON N8A 5G5; dsheath@cogeco.ca.

Kincardine, Knox. Rev. Peggy Kinsman, Box 219, Lucknow, ON N0G 2H0; peggyk@scsinternet.com; 519-528-3730.

Largie, Duff; Crinan, Argyle. Rev. Amanda Birchall, RR 3, Appin, ON N0L 1A0; 519-289-0977; Amanda_Birchall@hotmail.com.

Milverton, Burns; North Mornington. Rev. Mark Davidson, 220 Livingstone Ave. N, Listowel, ON N4W 1P9; jmdavidson@porchlight.ca.

Port Colborne, First. Rev. Cameron Bigelow, 6 Burns Pl., Fort Erie, ON L2A 3W1; cbigelow@vaxxine.com.

Shakespeare, Shakespeare Church; North Easthope, Knox. Rev. Peter Bush, Box 235, 92 St. Andrew St., Mitchell, ON N0K 1N0; 519-348-9080; knoxmit@quadro.net.

Stratford, St. Andrew's. Rev. John Zondag, 220 Livingstone Ave. N, Listowel, ON N4W 1P9; 519-291-4690; jzondag@porchlight.ca.

Synod of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario

Lockport, MB, Lockport Community; Stonewall, Knox. Rev. Henry L. Hildebrandt, 923-11th Ave. N., Kenora, ON P9N 3K7; 807-468-3888; hhilde@gokenora.com.

Winnipeg, First. Search Committee, c/o Rev. Ken Innes, 23 Parkview Pl., St. Andrews, MB R1A 3B7; 204-334-6177.

Winnipeg, St. John's. Rev. Brenda Fraser, 2373 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R2V 4T6; 204-339-3502; kpresbyc@mts.net.

Synod of Saskatchewan

Melfort, St. James; Tisdale, St. Andrew's. Rev. George Yando, 314-24th St. W, Prince Albert, SK S6V 4N1; 306-764-4771; geoyando@sasktel.net.

Saskatoon, Calvin Goforth; Saskatoon, McKercher Drive. Rev. Amanda Currie, 436 Spadina Cres. E, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3G6; revacurrie@shaw.ca; 306-242-0525.

Swift Current, St. Andrew's (full- or part-time). Rev. Eric Muirhead, 2170 Albert St., Regina, SK S4V 1A4; 306-522-9571; revfirstpres@sasktel.net.

Synod of Alberta and the Northwest

Banff, AB, St. Paul's. Rev. Leslie Walker, 1009 15th Ave. SW, Calgary, AB T2R 0S5; 403-244-5861; Fax 403-229-3108; lesliew@grace.calgary.ab.ca.

Bassano, AB, Knox; Gem, Gem Church. Rev. Dr. R. Cruickshank, 504-2nd Street SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0C6; 403-526-4542; st_johns@telusplanet.net or Rev. D.V. Beach, 212 Perry Cres. NE, Medicine Hat, AB T1C 1X3; 403-526-3512; beachdv@memlane.com.

Edmonton, Mill Woods. Rev. Richard Frotten, 13820-109A Ave., Edmonton, AB T5M 2K1; frotten@shaw.ca.

Willowdale (Red Deer), AB, Zion (rural; .6-time). Rev. Andrew Burnand, 4718 Ross St., Red Deer, AB T4N 1X2; 403-346-4560; knoxrd1898@yahoo.ca.

Synod of British Columbia

New Westminster, First. Rev. E.M. McLagan, #214-22015-48th Ave., Langley, BC V3A 8L3; 604-533-4800; emclagan@telus.net.

Victoria, St. Andrew's. Rev. Kerry McIntyre, 531 Herbert St., Duncan, BC V9L 1T2; 250-746-7413; Fax: 250-746-7450; revkerry@cowichan.com; http://standrews.pacificcoast.net.

All notices of pulpit vacancies will be charged to the congregation: \$10 for the basic notice and \$1 per word for additional information. (There is no charge for congregations on the Every Home or Club 50 plans.) **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

Ordinations and inductions

Rev. Teresa A. Charlton, ordained and inducted, St. Andrew's, Tweed, Ont., May 30.

Rev. Katherine McCloskey, ordained, Pickering, Ont., Jan 25; inducted, St. Andrew's, Stirling, and West Huntingdon, Ont.

Rev. Mark Richardson, inducted, Kitchener East, Kitchener, Ont., Feb. 1.

summer directory

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Interim Moderator —
The Rev. Kerry McIntyre
Pastoral Visitor — The Rev. Dr. Arthur Currie

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ANNUAL DINNER

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2004

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called to wonder

Created by Jennifer O'Farrell,
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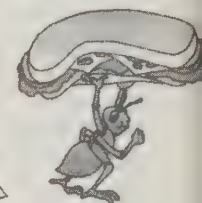
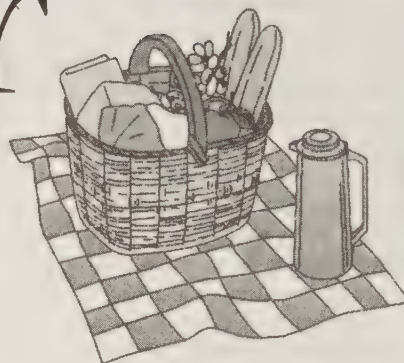
FACT: Scientists have counted more than 20,000 species (or types) of ants on our planet.

Observing active ants outdoors is a fascinating summer pastime. Have you ever seen an ant carrying a piece of food larger than itself? If you patiently follow the ant, it will go back to a hole in the earth that is the entrance to its home.

Ants live in underground colonies. There is probably a colony in your backyard or local park. Ants prefer to live near water and are often found near fallen trees.

These tiny insects are a wonderful part of God's creation.

With your family's permission and help, you could create a house for ants. The whole idea of an ant jar is to make a very narrow space in which ants can live. By making it out of glass, you can see into it from the sides.



Make an ant jar

Supplies needed: (1) a large glass jar (empty and clean) with a lid, (2) a smaller glass jar (also empty and clean) that will fit into the larger jar, (3) loose or sandy soil, (4) a scoop or funnel

Other supplies needed: a small, clean, glass jar with lid (for capturing ants), sugar, water, birdseed or grass seed, and a towel for a cover

Construction: Place the smaller jar upside down (without a lid) in the centre of the large jar. Fill the space between the two jars with the soil. Completely fill the area but do not pack the soil too tightly. Leave two or three centimetres of empty space at the top of the jar. Put the lid on.

Getting the ants: Mix a little bit of sugar with a little water in the small glass jar you have saved. Keep the lid with you and place the jar on its side on the ground near a busy anthill. After you have collected about 20 ants, put the lid on.

A new home: In an outdoor area, pour the sugar water with the ants into your prepared ant jar. To keep the ants from escaping, immediately put on the lid. Place indoors in a secure place and cover with the towel.

Feeding the ants: ONLY once each week, feed the ants a few drops of sugar water and a few grains of seed. Put the food directly on the soil at the top of the jar. Resist the temptation to give extra food or to feed more often.

FACT: In North America, hundreds of types of ants have been named.

FACT: Each colony has only one queen.

FACT: Ants have three primary methods of obtaining food: gathering, hunting and growing.

FACT: Ants are social insects, with each ant having a specific job in the colony.

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Despite worldly, corrupt and pious translators, it's an enduring miracle

by Andrew Faiz

If you wanted to live in really interesting times, may I suggest 17th-century England. A once beloved monarch, the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I, has just died as the century begins. Shakespeare, who will be known as the greatest English playwright for centuries, is in late career. A civil war is brewing and will break open in 1625, sending disgruntled Puritans in search of a new life on a new continent. Presbyterianism is making an aggressive play for power but will be beaten and sent bitterly back to Scotland. There is a plague killing thousands. Public executions of theological reformists are common. A new king, tired of ruling Scotland, is ascending the English throne. An ugly man with a charmer's personality, a shrewd politician and a self-avowed intellectual, James Stewart will find a unique solution to glue his new land together. He will commission a new translation of the Holy Bible.

According to *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* by Adam Nicolson, this translation was a political document whose greatest purpose was to maintain the king's authority as the unifying force over a divided land. It was managed and translated by worldly, corrupt and pious administrators. The chief translator was Launcelot Andrewes, who prayed for hours each day, often in tears for his miserable soul. He also knew how to milk money out of churches, gave his brother juicy jobs within the church and sat on incredible wealth. Nicolson portrays him as a brilliant and wicked man. (When the plague got too close to his own parish, Andrewes moved to another parish without a care for his parishioners who, he believed, were being punished by God.)

Another of the translators was Robert Cecil — also a smart, corrupt man. He built three large estates for himself out of money he siphoned off the king. According to Nicolson, almost everyone associated with the translation was a rogue of some definition.

The 50 translators formed a complicated bureaucratic structure that checked and rechecked each section of the Bible a couple of times. They each wrote and

Beautifully written by a committee of cynics, it endures in our imagination today as the Voice of God

read many current and ancient languages. They debated the fine points of certain verses, whether to use Anglo-Saxon or Latinate words. They thought about the word of God, all the while keeping an eye for King James's approval. And they remained wary of the Puritans who wanted to dislodge the king as the head of the church.

While purporting to write for the sake of the common man, the translators chose a language that was already antiquated. They were men of their times, comfortable with language, knowledge, power and hypocrisy. They distanced themselves from the Calvinist Geneva Bible (the choice of the age) and the popular Tyndale Bible (written in the vernacular) while, at the same time, borrowing heavily from those translations.

When the *KJV* appeared in 1611, it was a flop. Its namesake and benefactor was executed in 1649 after a bloody civil war. The Pilgrims didn't bring the *KJV* across the Atlantic; they preferred the Geneva Bible. And, yet, the *KJV* has become the most popular English transla-

tion for the past two centuries. Beautifully written by a committee of cynics, it endures in our imagination today as the Voice of God.

Such beauty born of such horrible men and desperate times. The Geneva Bible is the forgotten translation. Its first verse from the Gospel of John reads: "In the beginning was that Word, and that Word was with God, and that Word was God." The familiar *KJV* puts it:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Just one word, but it's all the difference that matters. And in that difference is a complicated history of Christianity. It was Tyndale who made the familiar translation from the Greek. The *KJV* committee stole liberally from Tyndale. That's the same Tyndale who was declared a heretic by Thomas More and executed. Tyndale once said to a powerful man, "I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost." That was the purpose of his translation — to make the word of God open to all who sought it. It was that very hope that seeded the civil war. But it did come true. And that's a miracle. A complicated, messy, bloodied and bludgeoned miracle, perhaps, but a miracle nonetheless. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.



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Left: Rev. E. H. (Ted) Johnson.
Right: Photographer Peter Williams documented the Biafra story for DanChurchAid.

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Mission's focus must fit the context

Two Teds were always on the edge

Each year, coinciding with the church's General Assembly, the E.H. Johnson Memorial Trust honours the memory of Rev. Dr. Edward (Ted) Johnson, a former Presbyterian missionary, by presenting an award to someone "for service on the cutting edge of mission."

What is the cutting edge of mission today? I recently listened to a radio program about African missionaries conducting missions in Britain — a century and a half or so after British missionaries began spreading Christianity in Africa. Church attendance has fallen drastically in Britain, as in much of Europe, and these missionaries see a field ripe for harvesting — and perhaps they will have some success. But is that the cutting edge or is there a danger in confining oneself to a too narrow interpretation of Matthew 28:19-20 that focuses on conversion as the lone goal of mission? What Jesus says there is: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

A broader interpretation of this passage includes all the other commands of Jesus, such as his teaching in Matthew 10:40-42 that "whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple — truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward." One evidence of Christian discipleship is the concrete expression of love for others. It was apparently that sense of mission that inspired Ted Johnson.

Thirty-five years ago, Canadians led by Johnson and other church officials were among those who did their best to avert the genocide in Biafra. They saw it as part of their mission as Christians to get food and medical relief to civilians who were dying at the rate of up to 6,000 a day. Today, genocides continue in parts of Africa, eastern Europe and much of Asia. Are churches doing an adequate job of speaking out against these atrocities and providing relief to the victims?

The generally unsettled state of the world politically and economically meant that the role and concept of mission was one of the most discussed issues during the August meeting of the general council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches held in Ghana. The discussion reflected the diversity of situations around the world in which Christian communities find themselves.

In parts of Africa, such as Nigeria and the Sudan, political, economic, racial and tribal divisions are reflected in religious

battles. A Nigerian minister whose house had been burned down three times and who nearly lost his own life and his family several times at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists could scarcely believe Muslims don't act like that in Canada — and who could blame him? Perhaps more difficult to understand was a South African who tried to persuade people that all Muslims are committed to the economic takeover of the world — and who didn't back down from his position even when it was pointed out that Jews have been maliciously tagged with that ambition countless times in history. (It frequently eludes Christians how easy it must be for Muslims and people of other faiths to conclude that a nominally Christian country like the United States is trying to take over the world at the expense of poor non-Christians.)

The diversity of mission situations brought the council to conclude that, "more than ever, faithful mission today requires our connection — really it demands bonds of belonging — between one another as churches. The challenges we now face in proclaiming the Good News will simply overwhelm us if we confront them as individual churches alone."

Just before the council met, an unusual coincidence took place in the death of Anglican Archbishop Ted Scott. Archbishop Scott was cut from a similar cloth as Ted Johnson. Both were passionate and outspoken about social and political evils. Ted Johnson was drawn to Chairman Mao's version of communism, perhaps never seeing its terrible side; Ted Scott was called the Red Primate for his left-wing views. Ted Scott's biography by journalist Hugh McCullum was published recently. It is Mr. McCullum who was commissioned by the *Record* to write the story about Biafra and Ted Johnson's role in that horrific event.

In a world that seems increasingly filled with tension and fear, the mission to proclaim God's love in tangible ways seems increasingly important. The two Teds and those who worked with them set an example of committed caring for all God's people and so were always on the cutting edge. It is a mission that must not be forgotten.

David Harris

King James's head remained intact

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the July/August *Record*. However, I would take issue with *The Making of the King James Bible*. Whether the problem stems from the book reviewed or the author's broad strokes, there are errors relating to history.

A civil war did not "break open in 1625," the year King James I (also James VI of Scotland) died. The accession of Charles I (a fan of absolute monarchy) to the throne and his dissolution of Parliament soon after were the seeds of a civil war that did not start until 1642. While Parliament was dissolved between 1629 and 1640, more than 20,000 Puritans immigrated to the Americas.

It was Charles I who was executed in 1649, not James, the "namesake and benefactor" of the King James Bible. While James was no saint, and perhaps should share the blame for what happened 17 years after his death, he did not see civil war.

The errors aside, the article gave some fascinating information, enough to encourage me to read the book.

*Rev. Angus Sutherland,
Kitchener, Ont.*

Editor's note: *Thanks to readers who know their history and notified us of the errors.*

Fascism, anti-Semitism et al

With respect to the second-last paragraph in the June editorial discussing nationalism, Fascism and anti-Semitism, I would like to make the following points:

1. The creation of the German Empire, engineered by Bismarck in 1871, did not lay the foundations of Fascism. The Kaiser's Germany was neither Fascist nor anti-Semitic and had an elected Parliament. Jews held many important positions in business, professions, arts and science, and continued to do so until the Nazi takeover from the Weimar Republic in 1933-34.
2. Fascism was initially an Italian concept, based on certain symbols of power in ancient Rome, and came to rule Italy under Mussolini in the early 1920s. Fascist Italy was not particularly anti-Semitic until it became closely allied with Nazi Germany after 1940. The Franco dictatorship in Spain after 1939 was also Fascist but not overtly anti-Semitic.

3. The vicious anti-Semitism of the German Nazis was dreamed up by the young Adolf Hitler when he lived in poverty in Vienna, where there was a strong anti-Semitic leaning in the popular press. The Nazis copied some features of Italian Fascism, but the policies that culminated in the Holocaust arose essentially from the paranoid obsessions of one man.
4. The 1897 Zionist aim for a Jewish home in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire, was underwritten by the British government during the First World War. The home was envisaged as a sharing of Palestine with the Arabs under British control. The independent state of Israel was created largely as a result of American pressure in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust, with scant regard for the Palestinian Arabs.
5. One might question the editor's statement that Nazi Germany was an evil regime but Israel is not. Many Israelis and Jews elsewhere are horrified by the cruel methods of repression and reprisal used by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government. If killing innocent bystanders and destroying the homes and livelihoods of ordinary Palestinian citizens as a matter of state policy is not evil, then what is?

*Charles R. Neill,
Edmonton*

More satire, less cynicism

I think Peter Plymley could be more effective as a satirist instead of a cynic. If the pen is more potent than the sword, he might forsake the rapier thrusts and adopt the method of a skilled surgeon who has learned how to use a laser for the patient's healing.

A good friend and colleague, who served as a teaching elder for several years before working with prison parolees, told me, "If I had it to do over again, I should choose the ministry as a *second* vocation, as it would have made me more compassionate." (I think it was Oscar Wilde who wrote that life is a



comedy to the person who thinks but a tragedy to the person who *feels*.)

Nearly threescore years ago in Grey County, I was assigned Rudyard Kipling's poem A Children's Prayer to memorize. The stanza I cherish most is:

Teach us delight in simple things,
And mirth that hath no bitter springs;
Forgiveness free of evil done,
And love to all men 'neath the sun.

I was deeply touched by Michael Coren's God's Grace Has Consequences in the July/August *Record*.

Walter A. Donovan,
Tonawanda, N.Y.

Be compassionate to the world but not conformed to it

Love and compassion are gifts Christ shares with us every day. Through the Scriptures and his ministry, he has shown us how we should treat others. However, though one may have love and compassion for others, there are still rules we are to follow in life.

I have been surprised by some of the comments and close votes regarding same-sex marriage within our denomination (East Toronto Presbytery Says No to Temporary Approval of Same-Sex Marriage, June). Yes, there have been court decisions in British Columbia and Ontario that legitimize these unions, but there are other rules Christians should have a right to share and defend.

People in same-sex unions are made in God's image and are worthy of our love and compassion. But if we bend God's rules or can't explain our reasons why these types of marriages should not occur, then we are no different from the rest of the world and are creating a carnal world deprived of God and his rules.

Bruce Compton,
Pickering, Ont.

The way East Toronto presbytery is dealing with the same-sex marriage issue is not only puzzling but equally frightening. Puzzling because, in 2002, the General Assembly reaffirmed that marriage is "between one man and one woman." Frightening because we seem to be losing our commitment to obey God's word.

Seeking Refuge

Photo: Gesine Wollinger, ACT/Caritas



Preparing a meal in the Dirage camp for internally displaced people in Darfur, Sudan.

Dirage camp near Nyala, Darfur, is home to some 8,000 people. Families are living in temporary shelters, most making do with only one meal a day. There are no water facilities or any medical services. Many children suffer from diarrhoea, and the rainy season has brought the danger of malaria and other infectious diseases. People want to return home, but it is still too dangerous. At least they feel safe here.

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letters

continued

Do we not confess that "The Bible is to be understood in the light of the revelation of God's work in Christ" (*Living Faith*, 5.4)? Since when does a provincial government's decision to allow same-sex marriage have jurisdiction over obedience to the word of God? Why do we need to struggle with this issue as the moderator of presbytery suggested?

If Rev. Jane Swatridge "does not wish to defy the church or threaten the well-being of her new ministry," why did she bring this issue to presbytery? Have we not made the vow that we "believe the government of this church ... to be founded on and agreeable to the word of God ... to maintain and defend the same"? Yet, the suggestion is, in due time, same-sex marriage will be accepted by the Presbyterian Church.

Scripture is clear that homosexuality is a sin. Without question, issues like this will tear the church apart. It is not that we are against homosexual individuals, but God's word reminds us to be faithful to him above anything else. The sad part is, if we ever allow same-sex marriage in the Presbyterian Church, a split would be so severe it might well mark the end of our denomination, which is already declining rapidly. We need to pray that we will grow in obedience to Christ, Lord of the church.

Rev. Hugh Appèl,
London, Ont.

Once again I am appalled at the statements and actions jumping from the pages of the *Record*. Some church members seem to think the courts of our land should dictate Christian values.

Why do the members of presbytery not accept biblical truth and the General Assembly's affirmation that marriage is the union "between one man and one woman"? Why do they not accept that the homosexual lifestyle is rejected throughout Scripture? Instead, Rev. Dr. Bob Fourney, moderator of the Presbytery of East Toronto, said the presbytery meeting was "beginning a long journey to consensus," and presbytery set up another study committee having

"people without strong personal opinions." What a monumental waste of effort! The result will be more compromise, confusion and creeping secularism. We need people "entrenched" in their faith to speak the word truthfully.

It is very frightening that some of our members look to the courts or legislators or modern trends for guidance. Believers search and find God's truth revealed in his word and through his Spirit.

James A. Miller,
Thunder Bay, Ont.

Once again I'm disappointed, fearful and tired of reading articles like the report about East Toronto presbytery's decision to struggle with the same-sex marriage issue. Why struggle at all? Scripture states clearly that anyone engaging in the homosexual lifestyle is going against God's will. What is so hard to understand about that?

For thousands of years, the Jewish and Christian faiths have stood behind the premise that the practice of homosexuality is wrong, simply because God's word says it's wrong. In 1922, Karl Barth wrote in a magazine called *Between the Times*: "Accommodate the culture and the church will descend down to the lowest common denominator of human opinion. It will slide further and further down that slippery slope of moral decay, it will begin to justify the most hideous crimes because the Word of God, the benchmark for making moral decisions, will have been abandoned."

When we remove God's boundaries, there will be no stopping us. We will be like the child sitting at his toy-box pitching out everything he doesn't like until he ends up screaming because there is nothing left.

Gerrie Rothery,
Wallaceburg, Ont.

Thanks to the congregation and the national church

I have been reading with interest your coverage of maternity leave (January *Record*) and the letters in response. I am the minister of a rural, three-point charge

in Scotsburn, N.S. After serving for a year and a half, I announced my husband and I were expecting triplets.

Two months later, my activity was restricted: my office became a bed or couch, I led worship sitting down with lay leaders assisting, and meetings and visits were held in our home. For nine weeks before our babies were born, I was confined to bedrest. My congregation was very supportive and generous, and the national church benefits paid for pulpit supply during this time.

After the babies were born, I went on maternity leave. As we live in a manse, the top-up coverage was simplified. The church continued to provide the manse, and we were reimbursed for utilities and rent during the top-up period. My stipend was paid and reimbursed up to 95 per cent of my total salary (including housing). After the top-up period, the church continued to provide the manse, and we paid utilities. Our congregations (the largest with 90 attending for Sunday worship) decided they could manage with Sunday supply and pastoral care three days a week. With the help of the Sunday supply person, a moderator, our presbytery worker and laypeople pitching in, the year went well.

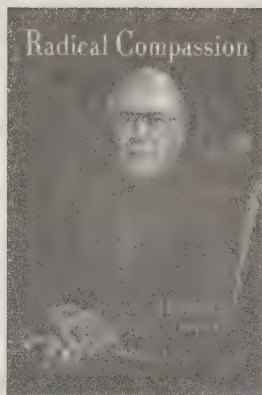
I appreciated Sarah Travis's letter (July/August) stating, "It takes a congregation to raise a baby." Never is this more true than with triplets! Since I returned to work in the middle of June, it has been amazing to see my three children with people in different parts of the sanctuary as I lead worship. Some faithful volunteers still come to our home to help care for them.

We are so thankful for our church family and the generosity and understanding of the session and board. Although all situations are different, the national church benefits have worked well for us.

*Lara Scholey,
Scotsburn, N.S.*

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Faith finally confronts AIDS

It took 15 years, but faith-based organizations finally took their place at the International AIDS Conference this year — and were warmly welcomed in doing so. Their absence at previous conferences was attributed to the ambiguity religious groups felt toward this disease. But faith-based organizations, it was agreed, can influence and inspire, reaching into people's hearts and minds like no other group.

Visibly present in large numbers at the meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, were Muslims, Franciscan friars, Buddhist monks and nuns, bishops from Lutheran and Roman Catholic dioceses, Orthodox priests, rabbis, evangelical Christians, Hindus, Roman Catholic nuns and priests, and other ministers, including myself. Besides the welcome, our views and opinions were also sought.

In all, about 20,000 people attended the meeting, including Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, movie star Richard Gere, Nelson Mandela and his wife Graca Machel, filmmakers, Princess Mabel van Oranje-Nassau of the Netherlands, research scientists, former Irish president Mary Robinson, representatives of pharmaceutical companies, Sonia Gandhi of India, African traditional healers and medical researchers.

AIDS barged onto the world stage as an unscripted character more than 20 years ago. It has taken centre stage through adaptation, tenacity and outright belligerence. To paraphrase Mr. Annan: AIDS has reached out and touched every aspect of the drama of human life. It is a threat to the entire storyline of human development.

Since the first diagnosed case in 1981, AIDS has claimed 20 million lives. In 1991, 10 million people were infected. That number rose to 38 million by 2003. In 2003 alone, there were five million new infections. While sub-Saharan Africa



Faith delegates pray for strength in the fight against AIDS.

is the epicentre of this crisis, the disease is growing fastest in Asia and Eastern Europe today.

Through this disease, the world is receiving a crash course in culture and traditions. Cultural nuances of every ethnic group from all 199 countries of the world are now playing out on the world stage

'Faith communities are returning to their root purpose of supporting and sustaining the life that God created'

Dr. Mercy Amba Oduyoye

for others to comment on. They also influence others on the same stage. Never before has such scrutiny been placed on how the human family interacts. Religious, cultural, gender, judicial and legal practices are all before us, and each is having an impact. The human community is being drawn together as never before to deal with a fundamental health issue.

The goal of faith-based organizations is to work together toward a world in which all people will have access to prevention, treatment and care in the fight against the spread of this disease. As we work with the larger civil society, business and governmental bodies, each must know what role we are assuming.

Mr. Annan emphasized that HIV/AIDS is a public health issue, not "just" a public health crisis. It touches every aspect of life. Princess Mabel van Oranje-Nassau declared that our response must be based on needs, not on ideologies. In a dramatic appearance on the eve of his 86th birthday, Nelson Mandela said, "No longer is AIDS just a disease; it is a human rights issue." He has committed himself to speak for those who are marginalized and forgotten in society.

The conference pointed out that, once again, women and children are those most vulnerable. Children are affected by either losing one or both parents at an early age (15 million to date, 11 million of those in Africa) or by being infected at birth. Women are an increasing proportion of people newly infected by HIV. In his speech, Mr. Annan said, "Countries need to empower women and girls to develop the ability and confidence to negotiate their life choices safely."

The Christian pre-conference addressed the issues of stigmatization, discrimination, fear, suspicion, care and prevention. The overarching theme, Access for All, emphasized the accessibility of drugs proven to control the advance of the disease and that can extend the lives of people in developing countries.

HIV/AIDS challenges the church. We have been challenged previously in our initial response to the disease, our efforts to offer comfort and care, our attitudes of judgment and our ministry in Canada and overseas. Today, we are challenged at the heart of our faith — how we put our faith into practice. “The call to solidarity, tolerance and compassion is evidence that the faith communities are returning to their root purpose of supporting and sustaining the life that God created,” said Dr. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Ghanaian theologian. “Compassion is more than pity. Having mercy is not just saying sorry. It means helping to set right wrongs so that people may live in the fullness of life.”

The church and other religious bodies are best positioned to respond to this situation. Each religious coordinating body links to 1,000 community organizations whereas an average non-governmental organization connects to only 10. There are two million congregations in Africa, and up to a third of all health and education infrastructure is operated by religious groups. Richard Feachem, executive director of the Global AIDS Fund, said faith-based organizations play three key roles in this pandemic: “In education awareness and prevention, because you reach into every community, you reach into every family, you reach into every household. Your voice is one of moral authority, your voice is trusted, your voice is heard and, therefore, in matters of public awareness and prevention, I think your voice is critical.” He also acknowledged that Christians are doing a massive amount of work in caring for orphans and vulnerable children.

The churches have struggled for 20 years with how to react to this new character on the stage. It has not been easy. In a publication entitled *Church Leadership and HIV/AIDS*, Gillian Paterson stated: “It is naive to imagine that churches will reconstruct their ethical teaching with the sole objective of enabling people to avoid sexual infection. In this situation, what is the distinctive contribution the church can make?”

Religious leaders and communities of faith are learning to end guilt and denial, opening the way to reconciliation, hope, knowledge, healing, prevention and care. Faith-based organizations are pivotal to

the fight against stigma and discrimination. Churches have organizational networks that can mobilize people and resources to reach isolated areas. Churches acknowledge the suffering and reach out with compassion to those rejected. Faith communities help break the silence that comes from fear.

I was amazed that the individual statements of Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Christians all spoke of the same concerns, issues and shared hope that there is a united way forward to which all are committed to following. More than one governmental, medical or secular leader pointed out that, when all other institutions rise and disappear, the faith communities remain and speak to their communities. While it was acknowledged there are different beliefs in God, there is common ground for dialogue in the suffering of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The closing line in this act of the human story comes from Kofi Annan. “AIDS is not about hardware,” he said. “It is about compassion and doing the right thing.” During this year’s General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church established a fund through which Presbyterians can contribute to ease the suffering, to efforts in finding a cure and toward advocacy on behalf of those already in the midst of this worldwide epidemic.

This is still our Father’s world. God’s hand is still present in loving and caring ways, even when the human family plays out its various roles of the drama in faltering and stumbling ways. God’s love is still there, encouraging individuals to assume their roles and play their parts.



Moderator’s itinerary

September 11-12

100th anniversary
Knox, Lloydminster, Alta.

October 1

Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia, WCC General Secretary
and World Council of Churches members

October 2

WMS consultation concerning
Korean Christian Church in Japan

October 3

World Communion Sunday
St. Andrew’s (King Street), Toronto



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Canadian to complete Hakka Bible translation

When Paul McLean graduated from Knox College in 1982, he was inspired by Canadian Presbyterian missionary Clare McGill to apply for mission service in Taiwan. The following year, he was assigned to work with the Hakka people in Taiwan. Now, more than 20 years later, Dr. McLean has returned to the island country to complete something he began years ago: a translation of the Bible into the Hakka dialect.

Under Dr. McLean's leadership, a Hakka translation of the New Testament was completed between 1985 and 1993. Over the next two years, the Old Testament books of Proverbs and Psalms were finished and, in 1995, the McLean family moved back to Canada. Dr. McLean plans to travel periodically between his home in Toronto and Taiwan over the next few years to continue his research and translation.

Taiwan Church News

Chaplain promoted colonel

Padre David Kettle has been named director of chaplain administration, education and training for the Canadian Forces. The appointment follows his recent promotion to colonel — the first Presbyterian chaplain to obtain that rank in 40 years.

After graduating from Knox College, Toronto, Col. Kettle was appointed to a three-point charge in Ontario. He joined the Canadian Forces in 1981, serving at bases throughout the country, at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, and with the United Nations in Bosnia, Croatia and Rwanda. He is a key adviser to the chaplain general on matters of military ethics, public prayer, interfaith dialogue and interoperability. He also designed the Chaplain Website. In 2000, he received the Head of the Public Service Award for his work as the chaplain general's project manager for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



What's in a name?

A friend of recently elected Moderator Rick Fee "googled" (is that officially a verb yet?) CFGB for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank website and received this response:

Central Florida Ghostbusters! Our courteous and efficient staff are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to handle all your supernatural elimination needs!

Oh, well, at least they're caught up in the spirit of their work.

And an article about butter tarts in the August 2004 *Toronto Life* magazine had this to say:

Butter tarts, like their bakers, can harbour religious differences. Presbyterian pies are crustier, while Catholic fillings run deeper.

Poor misunderstood Presbyterians. We're fortunate they didn't say "nuttier."

Southern Baptists leave Alliance

The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, has voted to leave the Baptist World Alliance. The convention had accused the alliance of accepting liberal theology, including a growing tolerance of homosexuality, support for women in the clergy and "anti-Americanism." Delegates officially cut ties with the alliance at the denomination's annual meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana.

ENI

South Africa honours anti-apartheid fighter

President Thabo Mbeki presented Baldwin Sjollem, the first director of the World Council of Churches Program to Combat Racism, with the Oliver Tambo Award, the highest honour South Africa gives to civilian foreigners. The 77-year-old Dutch sociologist, who lives near Geneva, was decorated by President Mbeki on June 16 in Pretoria for his commitment to the liberation of South Africa from the racist ideology of apartheid.

ENI

The Lord loves a cheerful and modest winner

Victims of a recent flood in Japan were given unexpected help from a mystery lottery winner who mailed a winning ticket to help them. Rescue officials in Fukui prefecture are marvelling at the winner's generosity after they received the ticket worth 200 million yen (\$2.38 million) with a note saying it was for the victims of the flood. The sender even used a false name and address so he or she could not be traced. The prefecture will give 20,000 yen each to 14,479 households that suffered damage.

Globe and Mail

Tutu praises former Anglican colleague Ted Scott

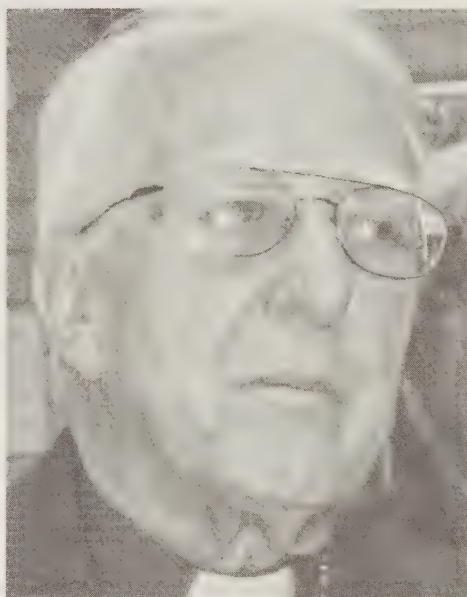
by Amy Sedlezky

More than 900 people packed Toronto's St. James' Cathedral with 600 more gathering outside to listen to retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu honour the life of former Anglican Archbishop Edward (Ted) Scott during a public memorial service on July 13. "He was someone who made God and the things of God attractive and accessible," said Bishop Tutu of Archbishop Scott. Both bishops were leaders of their national churches. "[People] were attracted to this gentle, compassionate one who reflected the character of the God he proclaimed and served ... Those at the bottom of the heap, those at the end of the queue, found in him a committed and courageous but gentle champion."

After a lifetime of challenging authority, debating hot topics and fighting for the rights of those who are oppressed, Archbishop Scott died in a car accident on June 21 near Parry Sound, Ont. He was 85. His funeral was held on June 29. The driver, Sonja Bird, was taken to hospital with serious injuries and later released.

"He was a very caring person," said the Very Rev. Lois Wilson, a long-time friend. "He didn't buy into the perks of being a primate. He wanted people to call him Ted. He was simply a person among other persons."

Dubbed the Red Primate for his outspokenness on touchy topics and commitment to social justice, Archbishop Scott was elected the Anglican Church of Canada's 10th primate in 1971 — the church's youngest ever at age 51. Archbishop Scott was also moderator of the central committee of the World Council of Churches between 1975 and 1983. During his tenure, he was an outspoken opponent of poverty and apartheid and was one of the seven members of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group whose 1986 report helped focus world attention on South Africa. He also championed women's ordination



Archbishop Edward (Ted) Scott

'More than any other person in recent Canadian memory, Ted Scott was Canada's pastor'

Moderator Richard Fee

and native land claims. His down-to-earth demeanour changed the council's offices. "He immediately moved in and visited the junior staff," remembered Dr. Wilson. "He dropped in for coffee at their offices. That was never done before. He humanized that place."

His devotion to standing up for others earned him respect and admiration. Moderator Richard Fee remembers him fondly. "More than any other person in recent Canadian memory, Ted Scott was Canada's pastor," said Mr. Fee. "He was known within one denomination as their ecclesiastical head, but he served the entire Christian community and, indeed, the nation as its spiritual pastor. He will be missed by all Christians in Canada and people of good faith everywhere."

Ted Scott remained a controversial figure into retirement, becoming an advocate for same-sex marriage in the Anglican Church. He performed a blessing for two

women deacons last September in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Toronto. Threats of division within the Anglican Church over same-sex issues frustrated him. He was baffled and disheartened at the attention these received while poverty, starvation and AIDS were taking lives throughout the world. "Homosexuality is not a choice; it is a discovery," he said.

In the forward to *Radical Compassion: The Life and Times of Archbishop Ted Scott* by Hugh McCullum, Archbishop Scott wrote: "The road of the Spirit of truth and justice starts at the margins, among the historically oppressed and powerless, and those in solidarity with them. It involves a willingness to question conventional wisdom in both the church and the world. It requires conversion, which is change."

Stemming from his commitment to the WCC, ecumenism was another important project for the former primate. In an interview with the *Record* last spring, Archbishop Scott spoke about the need for the church to improve its communication to further this endeavour and to be meaningful to society. "The world is based upon research today, and the church has not let this new information come into institutionalized life. People don't find the church as relevant as they once did," he said. "The church has to relate to its new context. It's not good at doing that."

Archbishop Scott's wife, Isabel, died in September 2000. They had four children, 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Following his wife's death, the archbishop found a confidant in long-time family friend Ms. Bird. Lois Wilson recalls the announcement made one night at the book club she and Archbishop Scott attended. "'Well, I might as well tell you,' he said, 'I've just fallen in love at 85.' It was wonderful. It gave him a whole new lease on life."

With files from the Anglican Journal and Ecumenical News International

Nouwen gets posthumous website

Fans of spiritual teacher and writer Henri Nouwen can log onto a new website dedicated to his legacy. Managed by the Henri Nouwen Society, the website at www.henrinouwen.org shares the writings of this author, professor, priest and pastor. The society was created to help people nurture and develop their spiritual lives, and the website is a tool in that endeavour. Solitude, community and compassion were the cornerstones of Nouwen's teachings and are perpetuated by the society.

"Not only is the website about Henri but it's about his message, and that's a broad, universal message," said Maureen Wright, resource coordinator at the Henri Nouwen Society.

The site is a rich resource for laity and leaders alike. It offers information on obtaining spiritual direction, where to find or how to start reading groups of Nouwen's books, university programs offering innovative learning opportunities and retreats sponsored by or sup-

ported by the society. A monthly events listing is included and allows readers to post their own events.

Site visitors can sign up to receive a free daily e-mail containing a meditation from Nouwen's writings. The prolific author wrote 40 books on psychology, theology, his eye-opening travels, days of solitude at home, personal journals and his mother's death. Nouwen's books have sold more than two million copies and are published in 22 languages. His 10 best-sellers can be bought on the website.

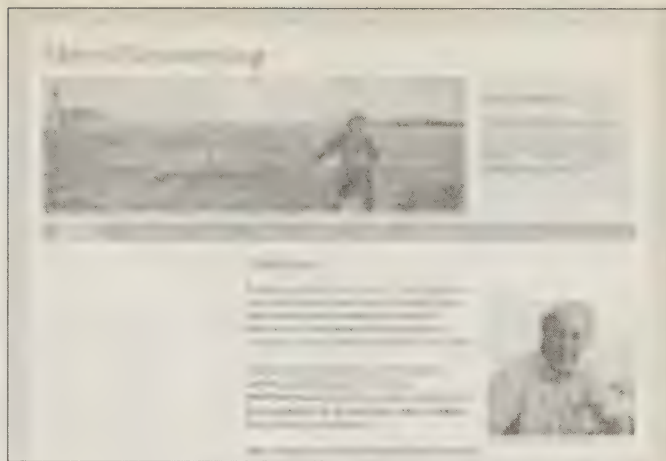
The site will always be evolving, said Ms. Wright, to keep things fresh, interesting and appealing. One of the future plans for the site includes online reading groups and chat rooms, where people can discuss Nouwen's writings.

The society is only in the promotional phase of launching the site but, based on the number of people signing up for

daily e-mails, traffic to the site is high. "We're happy so far but, really, this is just the beginning," said Ms. Wright.

Born in Holland in 1932, Nouwen travelled the world seeking to understand human suffering. Following seminary in the Netherlands, he studied religion and psychiatry at the Menninger Clinic in Kansas and taught at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, the Amsterdam Joint Pastoral Institute and the divinity schools of Yale and Harvard. He later travelled to Peru to work with people living in poverty. He eventually settled in Richmond Hill, Ont., where he worked with people having developmental disabilities. He died suddenly in 1996 and is buried in King City, Ont.

Amy Sedlezky



Freedom of religion is freedom from religion, judge rules

Senior citizenship judge Michel Simard has forbidden the Canadian Bible Society to distribute free Bibles to new citizens in citizenship courts. His ruling came in a letter, written in May by Judge Simard and citizenship registrar Patricia Birkett. The society is baffled by the news.

"It seems to be a deliberate attack on the church," said society spokesman Barrie Doyle. "What other conclusions can you draw from it?"

Representing the Citizenship Commission of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Judge Simard wrote that presenting holy books to new citizens may appear as though Canada endorses certain religions over others. Such a distinction is unfair in Canada's multicultural society and would impinge upon the freedom

of religion that is guaranteed under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But Mr. Doyle said this argument doesn't make sense. "It seems to fly totally in the face of what they say they want to accomplish," he said. An agreement made in 1998 between the commission and the society enabled any faith group to hand out its holy books in citizenship courts. "Freedom was there already," said Mr. Doyle. "To shut it down and say no one is allowed — that's not freedom for us or for any group."

The Bible Society's tradition of handing out Bibles to new citizens began more than 50 years ago when they were given to newly landed immigrants at Halifax's Pier 21. The organization now distributes about 35,000 Bibles to

new Canadians each year.

Rev. Phyllis Nesbitt, the society's national director, said she plans to appeal the court's ruling and denies claims that the Bible is sometimes forced on individuals. Since 1998, the society has been prevented from approaching new citizens and actively distributing Bibles. Instead, people must approach the Bible Society's table and ask for a copy.

The Canadian Bible Society has written a letter to its members, asking them to pray for the reversal of the court's decision and to lobby the government to take action against the change. A letter sent to Judge Simard asking for an explanation of his decision failed to elicit a response.

Amy Sedlezky, with files from Christian Week and the National Post

Taiwanese visitors honour pioneer missionary

by Amy Sedlezky

The Presbyterian Church national offices hosted 88 visitors from Taiwan on June 29 to commemorate the work of Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay, the first Canadian Presbyterian missionary to serve in Taiwan. Several groups were represented at the ceremony, including: Aletheia University (formerly Oxford College), Tamkang High School, Mackay Memorial Hospital and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Moderator Richard Fee welcomed the guests, saying their visit is not only a time to remember Dr. Mackay but also to build friendships and strengthen bonds between the two churches. Mr. Fee acknowledged Dr. Mackay's important contribution. "Often in Canada, we have not learned to recognize those who have contributed to the development of humanity," he said. "I believe this is a lesson you are bringing to us. We do have to recognize the past and give honour where honour is due."

Rev. Dao-Shiung Chen, Moderator of

the PCT, said the work of Dr. Mackay continues to flourish, influencing Taiwanese society in many ways. Even political figures rely on Dr. Mackay's words, often quoting his famous phrase, "Better to burn out than to rust out." Mr. Chen expressed thanks for the more than 100 years of mission work and partnership with the PCC and stated that next year marks the 140th anniversary of the gospel being brought to Taiwan.

The person largely responsible for sharing the gospel with the Taiwanese people was Dr. Mackay. Born in 1844, Dr. Mackay decided to be a missionary by age 10. In 1871, he was appointed as the Presbyterian Church's first missionary to Taiwan and settled in Tamsui. He combined his ministry with his profession of dentistry and focused on healing the entire person — mind, body and spirit. In addition to this work, Dr. Mackay founded Oxford College in 1882, the forerunner of Tamkang High School, and

Taiwan Theological Seminary, and started the area's first school for girls.

During his time in Tamsui, Dr. Mackay established 60 churches, numerous schools and baptized 4,000 people. In 1880, he founded the Mackay Clinic in Tamsui, the first to offer western medicine in northern Taiwan. Now called Mackay Memorial Hospital, it is one of Taiwan's largest and most modern hospitals with nearly 3,000 beds. It boasts a nursing college, and plans for a medical college are in the works for 2007. The hospital's burn unit, rape crisis centre, suicide prevention unit and hospice were all firsts for Taiwan.

Dr. Huang Chun-Hsiung, the hospital's superintendent, said Dr. Mackay's Christian ideals still influence the way the hospital is run today. They regularly send doctors to remote areas to care for patients who have no access to a physician. Hospital staff consider such service a basic Christian calling. During the SARS crisis last year, when many hospitals closed their doors to infected people, Mackay was "the first private hospital involved in treatment because we thought, as a Christian hospital, we have to take some responsibility and help," said Dr. Chun-Hsiung. "We need to fulfill our societal duties and our obligations as Christians."

In 1894, The Presbyterian Church in Canada elected Dr. Mackay moderator. In 1900, he returned to Tamsui and discovered he had throat cancer. He died in June the following year at age 57 and is buried in Taiwan.

Today, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has 1,215 congregations and about 230,000 members — the largest Christian denomination in the country.

The day after the event at church offices, the Taiwanese visitors headed to Oxford County (near Woodstock, Ont.), where Dr. Mackay was born, for the unveiling and dedication of a statue of Mackay. More than 300 people attended the ceremony. **[B]**



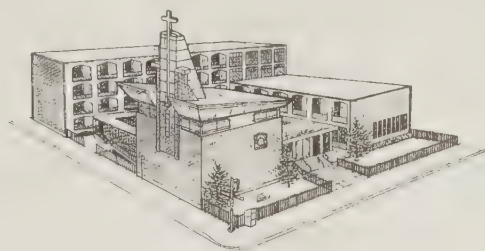
A bronze bust of George Leslie Mackay was unveiled in Woodstock, Ont., in June. Members of the Mackay family, church offices staff, Moderator Richard Fee and former Taiwan missionaries attended the event.

Photo by Harry Chen



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Remember *From Under a Blazing Aspen?* A new book is out by David Webber —

Like a Winter's Aspen

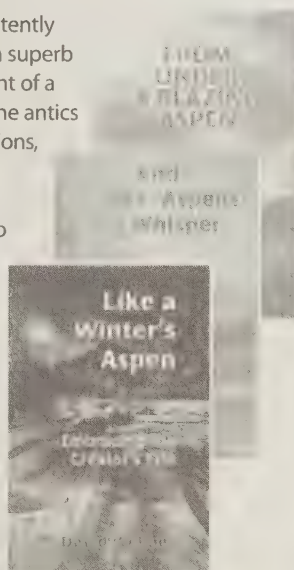
David Webber's monthly story in the *Presbyterian Record* is consistently one of the most popular sections, and for good reason. David is a superb storyteller, drawing the reader in as if chatting with friends in front of a late-night campfire. His astute observation of nature, especially the antics of animals, is engaging and often gently funny. From his observations, he draws such a natural parable for contemporary living that it seems as if God must have created the whole world to guide us on our journey — which is in fact what Christians believe, but too often forget. David Webber's stories remind and reassure us that God's overabundant, generous grace works in everything and through every situation. Regular readers will be delighted once again with this collection of stories, and new readers will find an uncommon touch here of contemporary spirituality that will stimulate and refresh them. I am proud of the *Record's* association with David and I highly commend this book to you.

— David Harris
(Editor/Publisher, *Presbyterian Record*)

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Conference teaches the joys of stewardship

Gratefulness for God's abundance was plentiful at a four-day ecumenical conference on stewardship in June. Held in Toronto, *The Joy of Stewardship: A Guide to Generous Giving* gathered 280 Christians of various denominations from across North America. It was the second time the conference was held in Canada.

"The purpose of wealth is the universal flourishing of the human community and the created world," said Dr. Richard Lowery during his address. "God desires that everyone has enough to live a full life." He said God intends abundance for all people — a goal that requires self-restraint and the rethinking of how people use money. "Poverty is not a natural law of the universe," said Dr. Lowery, professor at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Okla. "It must be abolished."

The conference combined keynote speakers with small workshops to stimulate discussion and kick-start new ideas. Plenary speakers included Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's former foreign minister and several prominent professors.

The Canadian Interchurch Stewardship Committee planned the event with the Ecumenical Stewardship Centre.

Annemarie Klassen, a member of the planning team and associate secretary of stewardship and education for mission in the Life and Mission Agency, said the conference was a success. "It gives people a new vision for stewardship in their congregations, and that vision is about more than meeting the budget."

'God desires that everyone has enough to live a full life'

Dr. Richard Lowery

Focusing on God's abundance rather than financial shortages was a positive approach. "Our economy is based on the fear that there will never be enough and that more is always better," said Ms. Klassen. "But God's abundance is not based on a scarcity model."

The idea of abundance rang true for Rev. Kristine O'Brien, Trafalgar Church, Oakville, Ont. "It had a depth of biblical foundation and a rooting in God's abundance that was compelling and consistent. There was no overriding feeling of money management, but of celebration," she said.
Amy Sedlezky

Allegation of wrongful dismissal at forefront again

The former minister of a pastoral charge in Prince Edward Island has won the right to have her wrongful dismissal allegation heard by the province's human rights commission. Rev. Gael Matheson, minister of the Murray Harbour North pastoral charge for 10 years, said she was asked to leave in 1996 because she is a woman. The case has been on-going since.

Ms. Matheson recently took her complaint to the P.E.I. Supreme Court where Judge David Jenkins ordered the commission to hear the case. The commission had previously refused, saying the complaint exceeded the one-year time limit on filing a complaint after the event occurred.

The commission's executive director,

Greg Howard, said the time limit was exceeded because Ms. Matheson followed the court process of the church before filing the formal complaint.

The tribunal has been postponed twice. Originally slated for July, it was rescheduled for September and will now be heard in early October. Paula Hamilton, clerk of presbytery, said the issue had nothing to do with Ms. Matheson's gender. Five of 13 charges on the Island are headed by female ministers. The interim minister who stepped in for Ms. Matheson is also a woman.

Ms. Matheson could not be contacted and her lawyer, Peter Ghiz, declined to comment.

Amy Sedlezky

Correction: An article in the July/August *Record* highlighting this year's honorary Doctor of Divinity recipients incorrectly pictured Alan Crabtree as recipient Rev. Dr. George Macdonald. We wish we could blame it on the overnight work of mischievous elves, but in fact it was a last minute mishap before the magazine went to the printer. Alan Crabtree is the husband of recipient Dr. Eleanor Knott Crabtree. And, yes, it is Eleanor Knott Crabtree, as stated in the introduction, and not simply Eleanor Crabtree as in the heading. As well, the *Record* received incorrect information concerning Dr. Knott Crabtree's bachelor's degree (in household science, not health science) and her WMS involvement (she recently completed a term as president of the Bruce-Grey presbyterial, not the Knox, Meaford, WMS). Our apologies to George Macdonald and to Eleanor and Alan Crabtree.

Rev. George Macdonald praised for supportive, caring leadership



Rev. George Macdonald has been the minister of Knox Church, Halifax, since 1990. A graduate of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, N.S., and The Presbyterian College, he also served congregations in Port Cartier, Que., Eckville, Alta., New Dublin, N.S., and Sackville, N.S. Along the way, he has earned a reputation as a strong, reliable leader "highly respected by all parties of church and community with whom he has shared responsibility."

A measure of that respect was evident in Rev. Dr. Sandy McDonald's remarks. He described being asked by The Presbyterian College to present Dr. Macdonald for his Doctor of Divinity degree as the highlight of his year as Moderator of the 129th General Assembly. "Dr. Macdonald is a very close

friend, a mentor, a colleague and a church leader whom I hold in very high esteem," he said.

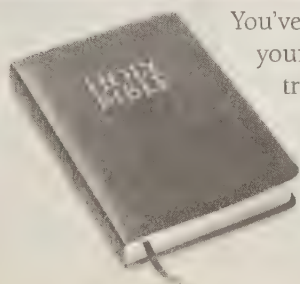
Dr. Macdonald has provided leadership at various levels of the church's life, including Assembly Council, Canada Ministries and the Committee to Advise the Moderator. As moderator of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces, he guided the synod through some critical matters in, as Dr. McDonald described it, "a supportive and caring manner that meant so much to so many."

In the community, Dr. Macdonald has been active in such organizations as the Atlantic Child Guidance Association, the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency and the Northwoods Seniors Residence. He also helped to establish a food and clothing bank in Bedford and Sackville.

He is also celebrated in the church for another quality — his sense of humour. Many of those who know Dr. Macdonald can recall being reduced to tears of laughter by one of his stories.



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Presbyterian Church membership in U.S. shows sharp decline

Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) declined sharply in 2003, prompting the denomination's leadership to call for "prayer and repentance." Figures released in June by the Louisville, Kentucky-based church show the denomination had 2,405,311 active and confirmed members at the end of 2003, a drop of 46,658 from 2002 — the largest proportional decline since 1983.

In reporting the figures, Clifton Kirkpatrick, the denomination's stated clerk, or chief executive, said the declining number of active members should prompt a redoubling of evangelization efforts in what he called "a time of deep spiritual hunger."

The total membership of the denomination in the United States is 3,241,267, a figure that includes 343,378 people baptized but not yet confirmed, most of them children. The denomination also reported it has 492,620 inactive members. As is the case with other mainline Protestant denominations, divisions in recent years on a number of social concerns

have vexed U.S. Presbyterians, particularly over issues related to sexuality. Churches tolerant of gay relationships are said to have declining membership, while denominations with more conservative views on the issue have been growing.

PCUSA has 11,064 congregations, a drop of 33 from 2002, and the denomination now ranks as the ninth largest Christian church body in the United States, according to the 2004 *Yearbook of American Churches*.

Presbyterians have historically exerted a strong influence in American religious and public life, including an important role in the civil rights movement of the 20th century and the Great Awakening revivalist movement of the 18th century. Eight American presidents have been Presbyterian, a number exceeded by only one other denomination, the Episcopal (Anglican) Church.

ENI

U.S. Presbyterians back divestment from Israel

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly has voted to start a process of a phased and selective divestment of its nearly \$8-billion US portfolio from companies that profit from sales of products and services that cause harm to Palestinians or Israelis or both. The effort is phased because it proceeds in stages. It is selective because it targets specific companies, since corporations differ in significance and involvement in undermining peace as determined by the denomination's research.

The assembly also opposed Israel's ongoing construction of a 684-kilometre-long "separation barrier" along the West Bank, annexing land without negotiation.

Both assembly actions provoked a firestorm of criticism from Jewish groups. *PCUSA News Service*

African churches declare war on HIV/AIDS, poverty

Church leaders from 39 African countries, meeting in Nairobi, have declared an all-out war against HIV/AIDS and poverty, two problems threatening to annihilate the continent's population.

"Africa has sounded a distress call to reverse depopulation of her people by the HIV/AIDS pandemic," members of the All Africa Conference of Churches said in a statement at the end of a three-day summit on June 11. "The continent is in a chronic crisis of crippling poverty too."

The churches promised to close the gaps caused by denominationalism and develop common policies to end the culture of silence, which promotes stigmatization, inhibiting effective responses to prevention, care and counselling. The churches want to see financial resources channelled directly to them, instead of always through non-governmental organ-

izations since the reach of the religious institutions is wider than that of NGOs. With these resources, they hope to make treatment available at church-supported hospitals, clinics, dispensaries and health posts.

'HIV/AIDS creates more poverty while intensifying the existing one drastically'

"Everyone living with HIV/AIDS is a candidate for treatment. Today, some 40 per cent of health delivery facilities in Africa are owned by the churches," Rev. Nyansanko-Ni-Nku, the AACC president who is a Presbyterian from Cameroon, told the media. Promiscuity is not higher in Africa than in the rest of the world but, according to the leaders, the continent is

much poorer than other continents, lacking the resources for HIV/AIDS intervention.

"We therefore condemn economic injustice and tendencies that reduce human beings to non-persons such that, in their poverty, they have become more vulnerable to the scourge. HIV/AIDS creates more poverty while intensifying the existing one drastically," the church leaders declared.

Churches anticipate 40 million HIV/AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, while citizens are expected to lose an average of 17 years of their lives to the disease in the early part of the 21st century. To remain focused, churches will mark the last Sunday of November each year, through fasting and prayer, for the rapid end of AIDS-related stigma, discrimination, denial and inaction.

ENI

Malawi clergy divided about reconciliation bid

Senior clerics in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi are at loggerheads over an initiative by the new president to promote reconciliation after a High Court challenge to May's general election results. In the poll, the president's United Democratic Front party won with 34 per cent of the votes cast. Churches and civil affairs groups charged the election was riddled with serious irregularities and violence, and there was massive vote-rigging.

The country's new president, Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, was opposed as a candidate by leading members of the Roman Catholic Church and the CCAP. After the poll, the president sought to initiate dialogue with the faith community, although some clergy had doubts about his intentions.

In June, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Evangelical Association of Malawi and representatives of the Muslim community, among others, attended a meeting with the president at his residence in Malawi. Rev. Daniel Gunya, general secretary of the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP, the largest of the church's three in-

stitutions in Malawi, hailed Dr. Mutharika for "choosing to forgive." But the other two Presbyterian synods distanced themselves from Mr. Gunya's stance. The Nkhoma and Livingstonia synods in the central and northern regions of the country argued there were too many violations in the poll to consider reconciliation.

Rev. Winston Kawale, general secretary of the Nkhoma synod, said: "We would like to dissociate ourselves with whatever he [Mr. Gunya] said because we did not send him as our representative to the meeting." Mr. Kawale noted that the invitation failed to clarify the agenda and remarked, "It is unfair for a minority party to rule the nation." The UDF won 49 of the 193 seats in Parliament and has attempted to woo independent candidates and opposition members to form a working legislative majority.

Some analysts, however, including government opponents, termed the discussions fruitful because church leaders tackled the important issues of the ailing economy, the deteriorating rule of law, persistent hunger and the worsening HIV/AIDS pandemic.

ENI

U.S. church leader arrested in protest over Sudan



Rev. Robert Edgar

The head of the U.S. National Council of Churches was arrested outside the Sudanese embassy in Washington, D.C., on July 14 for participating in, what he termed, a protest against the worsening humanitarian situation in the western Sudan region of Darfur. NCC general secretary Rev. Robert Edgar was one of 50 people who took part in the protest to call attention to the tens of thousands of people who have died and more than one million displaced in what observers are calling "ethnic cleansing."

"It is clear that a genocide is unfolding in Sudan," Mr. Edgar said about the crisis in the region, where Arab militias, known as the Janjawid, have reportedly attacked black African residents in the region, burned and looted villages, and raped and killed civilians. The militias are reported to be allied with the Sudanese government, although the government claims it has apprehended Janjawid members.

ENI



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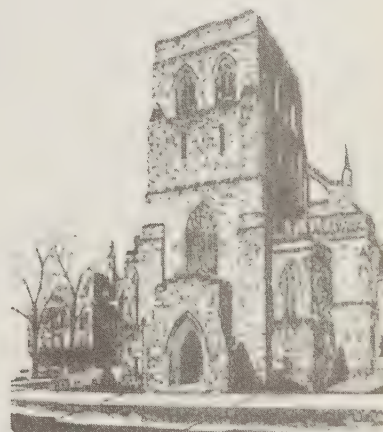
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REMEMBERING THE NIGHTMARE OF BIAFRA

E.H. Johnson was at the centre of saving lives in Biafra 35 years ago

by Hugh McCullum

It was officially called Jointchurchaid (JCA), but the daredevil pilots called it the Jesus Christ Airline with a swagger of pride and hint of awe. For almost two amazing years, JCA kept a small, breakaway West African state alive, refusing to allow starvation to be used as a weapon of war. It flew 5,314 missions, carrying 60,000 tons of humanitarian aid, and saved millions of lives.

The lumbering DC-6s and temperamental Super Constellations flew without lights at night from the island of Sao Tome off the coast of West Africa into a tiny airstrip carved from the dense bush. They skimmed blindly over the trees at 2,000 feet to avoid the enemy guns and fighters. At its peak, Uli "airport" — really just a widened road — was the busiest in all of Africa, handling up to 50 flights a night, and each flight broke some international law.

Each of the old planes had a JCA logo — two fish, one of the earliest symbols of Christianity. But each also had its own name — the best known in Canada was Canairelief, whose four Super Connies were an integral part of JCA. There was also Nordchurchaid (from Europe) and the Holy Ghost Airline (run by the Irish Catholic Holy Ghost Fathers).

JCA soon became the darling of the media, attracting journalists like author Frederick Forsyth, who made his name as a reporter in Biafra, and the CBC's Stanley Burke. For the first time in history, famine, starvation and the humanitarian response were seen nightly on world television.

It was all put together by a bunch of church people who refused to be bound by old mission, old diplomacy, old colonialism, the power of big oil and the secrecy of murderous bush wars. Men and women took the church's gospel mandate seriously to act in word and deed with the poor and the oppressed.

It was the late 1960s. JCA had the Vatican and the World Council of Churches integrally involved for the first time. It was the church in action. And in the very middle of it was the Presbyterian Moderator, Rev. Ted Johnson. A man of prodigious energy and talent, he held an unshakeable belief that to be Christian, to be the church, is "to serve humanity in concrete actions, to feed the hungry and to promote justice and peace. That is how the real nature of the church became known to the world."

And it was all very controversial with ramifications reaching into this century.



Humanitarian relief:

Canada says no, but churches say yes

It is 35 years since the independent state of Biafra collapsed, ending one of the most audacious and activist leadership roles ever played by international and ecumenical churches — and Canada and Presbyterians were firmly in the middle of it. On Jan. 12, 1970, the military head of state, Gen. Odumegwu Ojukwu, flew out of Uli on the last relief flight, Biafra collapsed and the then Eastern Region of Nigeria was returned to that troubled and fractious country.

Canairelief made its first flight on Jan. 23, 1969, and its final trip on Jan. 11, 1970. It completed 670 flights and delivered 11,000 tons of desperately needed food and medical supplies into the blockaded state of Biafra. Churches, relief groups and a few volunteer agencies, including a historic ecumenical alliance of Roman

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, FAMINE, STARVATION AND THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE WERE SEEN ON WORLD TELEVISION

Catholic, Protestant and Jewish organizations, bombarded Ottawa and raised the flag of famine. From the beginning, the indomitable and capable Ted Johnson was at the centre of it all, and he made 10 harrowing and dangerous trips into Biafra.

Four Canairelief crew members were killed when one Super Constellation crashed at Uli. A second plane was destroyed when it was bombed on the ground during the 20 minutes or so it took Biafran workers to unload the relief supplies for Caritas and the World Council of Churches, which ran more than 2,000 feeding centres. JCA lost 25 pilots and crew to the guns and bombs of the Nigerian forces intent on enforcing the Biafran blockade. The Nigerian military government of the day steadfastly refused to allow relief flights or any other form of humanitarian aid into Biafra. Despite JCA's best efforts, it is estimated some two million Biafrans starved to death. The world was shocked as stark pictures appeared on television screens of stick-thin children with the swollen bellies and sparse, rust-coloured hair that symptomizes kwashiorkor, the body's painful protein deficiency that killed children in their thousands.

Biafra was a nightmare for the international community, especially for Britain, France and — given the almost single-handed initiatives of Ted Johnson — Canada. The response from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau ("Where's Biafra?") and External Affairs Minister Mitchell Sharp was "shameful," according to the *Toronto Star* of Feb. 21, 1969, usually a Liberal party mouthpiece.

Johnson was unrelenting. He led a delegation of church leaders to Ottawa asking for help for starving Biafrans but was refused. With that rebuff came Canairelief, supported (without government money of any kind) by Jewish leaders, the Roman Catholic Church and major Protestant denominations, particularly the Presbyterian, United and Anglican churches.

Church leaders went back to the government twice to ask for transport planes or money. Twice more in 1968 they were refused. Johnson and his team then went the political route and arranged for two MPs — Tory David MacDonald, a United Church minister, and Andrew Brewin, an NDP Anglican — to fly into Biafra on Canairelief on a fact-finding mission. Their report, *Canada and the Biafran Tragedy*, became a book in 1970 that recommended Canada use its position to prod the United Nations to negotiate a ceasefire, participate in relief operations, push to have Nigerian civil rights violations under the UN charter enforced and give money for humanitarian relief. They got a flat "No" from Mitchell Sharp and U Thant, then UN secretary general. Both were more worried about the Federal Republic of Nigeria's specious unity than the millions of starving Biafrans.

Ottawa did send three Hercules freighters as part of an International Committee of the Red Cross relief effort. In an act of incredible incompetence or political venality, two went to Lagos and one to Sao Tome. Lagos impounded the two planes in Nigeria and never let them off the ground, while the Sao Tome aircraft was sent back home after another ICRC plane was shot down by the Nigerians.

"Compare this exercise in futility with the achievement of the churches," the *Toronto Star* editorialized. "Just four weeks after being turned down by Ottawa, Canairelief bought a Super Constellation [from Nordair, which used the huge four-engine freighters to service the DEW Line] for \$108,000 and, in less than a month, it had 28 flights into Biafra." And the reason? "They are not as timid as the Red Cross and the corridors of External Affairs."

By flying into Biafra, the ICRC and Canada argued they would be "recognizing" the breakaway state, thus annoying Nigeria's undemocratic military dictatorship under Gen. Yakubu Gowon. Ted Johnson argued that saving the lives of millions of men, women and children had a higher moral imperative than maintaining good diplomatic relationships with Nigeria, whose soldiers (along with British neo-colonial officials) were terrified the nation would split into many more parts than only Biafra. At the same time Canada was maintaining its timorous posture with Nigeria, several other countries, including Germany, Sweden and the United States, refused to stand by and allow millions to starve as the Nigerian government implemented its policy of famine as a weapon of war.

In today's even more violent world, where civilians

in their millions (far more than the military) are the victims of war, the same timid attitude prevails and churches have retreated behind their castle walls into bureaucratic survival. That was not the case with Biafra. "The churches of Canada responded to Biafra," Johnson said. "In doing so, they put the lie to the image of church leaders being exclusively concerned with their own institutions, not humanity. In this Biafra instance, the churches' enterprise is all that has saved Canada from moral bankruptcy in response to a distant people's agony."

Nation states or self-determination: what price?

The story of Biafra is also a story of the times: a story of church leaders who believed the church belonged in the midst of God's world; a story of a people's right to self-determination; a story of tribalism, colonialism and the influence of First World development in the Third World. The Presbyterian Church in Canada was intimately involved with Nigeria and Biafra, its missionaries accepted and often beloved. Through the likes of Ted Johnson and other missionaries, the church maintained its ties with the two combatants and their civilian populations.

Biafra's breakaway from Nigeria on May 30, 1967, was a crushing, if inevitable, blow to Africa's most populous country and, perhaps, an even greater blow to the policies of British neo-colonialism. It was the beginning of a seemingly endless round of rebellion, bloody coups, military dictatorships, appalling corruption, and ethnic and religious strife. After its independence from Britain on Oct. 1, 1960, loudly hailed within and without as a model for Africa of a happy and harmonious state, Nigeria descended into a state of chaos caused by colonial attempts to merge three distinct regions forcibly into one federal state. That chaos continues to this day, with Nigeria having suffered under a corrupt political civilian and military treadmill of successive coups and dictatorships.

Nigeria descends into chaos

Nigeria is a country of great climatic, territorial and ethnic variety, ranging from the tangled swamp and dense rain forest along its 800-kilometre coastline on the Gulf of Guinea and the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Bonny. Southern Nigeria is split into eastern and western portions by the Niger River. North of the forest, which runs inland some 160 to 200 km, lies the Middle Belt. Here, the woodlands give way to savannah grasslands and finally to semi-desert and scrub. Nigeria was exceptionally rich in natural resources. Immensely valuable oil and natural gas resources were discovered, mostly in the Eastern

Region. Altogether, today, Nigeria sprawls over 993,774 sq km, with an estimated 125 million people of enormous ethnic diversity. In the southwest are the Yoruba people, with a long history of developed kingdoms. Western culture came there first with the penetration by the British through Lagos. In the southeastern region, which would become Biafra, lived a variety of peoples, the most prominent being the Ibo, or Igbo as they are known today. North of the forest dwelt numerous non-Hausa people, animist vassals of the Hausa/Fulani Empire. The North proper was the land of the Hausa, Kanuri and the Fulani, who are Muslims. It took three years for the British to conquer the North and impose a form of indirect rule under the emirs and their courts. In 1914, the three regions were amalgamated for colonial administrative purposes, and the stage was set for Nigeria's instability.



The easterners quickly assimilated with the Yorubas and into British forms of development while the North, opposed to modernization, was open territory for the adaptable and resourceful Ibos who ran the trains, the civil service and small businesses. By 1966, an estimated 1,300,000 Ibos were living in the Northern Region and another 500,000 lived in the West. The Ibos made Nigeria run fairly efficiently in the early days of independence but, being Christian and modern, they were segregated from the northern Muslims. At home in the Eastern Region, Ibos and smaller tribes lived together equitably and finally united because of the war in 1966.

The first Nigerian election in 1960 produced a Parliament in which none of the three parties — roughly based on regional and ethnic support, and nepotism and corruption (the latter already well established under the British) — came into full force. Until 1960, the Nigerians had never lived together as one people ruling themselves. There are more than 300 ethnic groups and many languages. The three largest groups — Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo — each had more than five million people at that time.

Into this colonial stew came the colonizers and the missionaries well over 100 years ago. They found a traditional animistic spirituality, which still has great influence on thinking and behaviour. Islam and Christianity are the other two great religions affecting Nigerians. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity were firmly established in the south long before independence. Christian councils, schools, infirmaries, clergy and lay training schools, hospitals and universities were established by Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, including Canadians. Most churches had become autonomous by the mid-1960s or earlier but, in the colonial style, had divided the country into areas of interest.

National government and administration had been largely in the hands of the colonial power, Britain. Unlike southern Africa,

Nigeria did not fight a unified liberation struggle but has been struggling for the past 44 years for its unity. Independence brought intense rivalries and a mounting volume of corruption and nepotism, with the crisis forcing a state of emergency after the country was only two years old. In 1964, the second national election was grossly unfair, with widespread intimidation and violence. Lawlessness was rampant across the country. The first federal prime minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a northerner universally respected, was kidnapped with other high officials and eventually killed. The army revolted and, in early 1966, Maj.-Gen. Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Ibo from the East, staged the first of two military coups in one year, which ended the First Republic after only six years of independence.

Ironsi named military governors in the regions and a military council to rule the country. That year was a disaster for the Ibo, who occupied many of the civil service posts and a commanding position in commerce. Scathingly referred to in the Muslim north as “black Jews of Africa,” although they were about 90 per cent Christian, as many as 40,000 to 50,000 were slaughtered in pogroms in 1966 and some two million fled for their lives back to their Eastern Region homeland after their property and homes were destroyed. A huge refugee crisis faced the nation. It was ironic because easterners had always been the strongest supporters of national unity. Ironsi was killed in a second military coup after only six months. A northerner, Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon, established a military dictatorship and broke the country into 12 regions, instead of the previous four, to weaken the power of regional governments.

Rev. Ted Johnson (left) and Rev. Russell Hall meet with officers of the federal Nigerian army to pursue peace negotiations.



TED JOHNSON, A RETROSPECTIVE

I first met Ted Johnson in Biafra. I knew who he was — he was front and centre in those heady, optimistic days in the late 1960s when the churches had leaders who thought they should be in the middle of the grimy world that God's creation had become. Ted was in there with his Student Christian Movement theology, along with Lois Wilson (United Church) and Ted Scott (Anglican), challenging their musty establishments to change and change dramatically. Their goal was to change the world — which, after all, was their vocation — and change was their watchword.

I never did find out why Ted was there in that dugout lit by a flickering kerosene lamp. The last I'd heard he was meeting in Geneva with Eugene Carson Blake, another Presbyterian and general secretary of the World Council of Churches. They were trying to pressure the international community to make peace in Biafra and send in more aid.

It had been a hellish kind of trip into Uli, for me anyway. The plane was old, and we couldn't see anything. Tracer bullets whizzed by and everything was black. The big plane seemed suddenly small and vulnerable and terribly noisy. It was full of food and medicine strapped down where the seats used to be. No one told me about the landing. After a couple of hours with only the tracers to indicate there was anything below us, the descent began. No one said, "Fasten your seat belts" (there were none) and no one said anything about landing; we could just feel the plane going down into the black African night. It was scary. Suddenly there was a flash of lights for what seemed like 10 seconds (actually 30) and we hit the ground with a huge bang. All was black night again, and a voice said: "Out yuh go. The Intruder's around." Out I went. It's a long way down from a Super Connie. I fell, got up covered in red dirt and some people



Photo by Peter Williams

hustled me off to my certain death, I was sure. The bombs were in my lap, I thought.

And, then, there was Ted Johnson standing in that flickering lamplight, saying in his most charming way — and Ted was a charmer — "Welcome to Uli Airport, the republic of Biafra." I almost hugged him, except I'd never hugged a Moderator before, especially a Presbyterian one. He was wearing a brown clerical shirt, without the collar, on his stocky frame, looking as if he were picking me up at Toronto's airport. Suddenly I stopped shaking and felt safe. I never saw him again that trip, although he was there meeting Ojukwu, Akpan, Chief Justice Louis Mbanefo and Biafran army commander Philip Effiong. He knew everyone. And he knew everyone in Nigeria and half the capitals around the world. He didn't have a BlackBerry, but his address book was packed with names from everywhere. He knew about networking before it became the in thing.

Then it was time to leave. I was a wreck, and there he was at Uli again. We were both leaving on the first flight out. It was a bad night, and the Intruder was getting pretty close. We crouched beside a palm tree. The odd plane landed, but others turned back. Were we going to

get out? A Rhodesian plane offered us a lift, but Ted wouldn't fly on the gun runners. Finally, a Holy Ghost Airlines plane came in — a ratty, banged-up, old DC-6 that was flying to Libreville in Gabon. No boarding passes required. There we'd fly on Air Afrique to Paris and then to Canada. It was just before Christmas. It was simple, Ted said. We'd flown all over West Africa trying to make connections and our papers weren't in order, but he was my leader and we made it to Paris about 45 minutes before the Air Canada flight to Toronto.

We had to run like mad to make it in time. I didn't know Ted had angina and carried the little white pills in his suit pocket. I thought he was immortal. Suddenly, my leader turned kind of blue and started gasping. He pointed to his pocket where I found the pills. I was terrified he was going to die and leave me alone. He popped a nitroglycerine and, in seconds, we were charging across the airport to get home. We made it.

After that first meeting, he became a kind of hero to me. Like Ted Scott and Lois Wilson and all those other former SCMerS who had a special vision of the world as global and as God's creation, which they had the smarts and the guts to take on in the name of God.

The blockade of Biafra and starvation

Although Ojukwu was military governor in the Eastern Region, appointed by Ironsi and a classmate of Gowon, relations between the East and the Central governments deteriorated until meetings were no longer possible and Eastern leaders were pressing for secession. On May 30, 1966, Eastern Nigeria proclaimed itself the independent state of Biafra and declared a state of emergency. The central government imposed a naval blockade, and fighting began between the east and the rest of Nigeria. After some initial victories, Biafra, which started with a population of 12 million (two-thirds of them Ibos), lost all its cities, including the oil

Biafran oil, could understand all too well. Companies such as Gulf, Mobil, Texaco, Standard and Phillips, and participants such as Britain, Holland, France and Italy, knew 75 per cent of Nigeria's oil was in the secessionist state. When some began to threaten Gowon's government that they could get a better deal with Biafra, Nigeria was furious but also frightened. Who was going to get the oil revenues? In the complex diplomatic negotiations, the posture of the oil companies would be decisive in determining who would eat and who would starve, who would get guns from racist Rhodesia, Communist USSR and oil-hungry France and who would be defenceless. Nigeria had to prove it was still the powerhouse of Africa, "the working democracy with a sound economy, a free press and a moderate pro-Western government," as *Time* magazine once described it.

Could Biafra, with only four African countries recognizing it officially, display "effective sovereignty"? It was the same size as some of the Gulf states, just a platform for oil rigs. But Lagos did begin to win the war of starvation, and secession was very costly for the oil companies. The British government was irrevocably committed to federal Nigeria, and all the pipelines and storage facilities were home again in federal territory when Port Harcourt fell. But the French, holding few of the Nigerian franchises, had little to lose and continued to give support to Biafra. So it was that Britain wanted Nigeria to win and poured all its military and other resources into Gowon's unelected government; France, who didn't care if Biafra lost or not, supported it for commercial, oil and political reasons. And the Americans kept asking Biafra to compromise and save itself.

But Biafra couldn't simply give up. It wasn't simply the stubborn arrogance of the Ibos or the megalomaniac bravado of Ojukwu, there was genuine fear that the massacres of 1966 would resume. Surrender under the military's new federal structure would mean accepting the division of Biafra into three parts — with the Ibos crowded into a single section containing almost no oil. After the massacres of the North and the atrocities of the war, the Ibos saw it as the end of their people.

In May of 1969, Ted Johnson came back from another hair-raising flight into Biafra and reported that the war was no closer to a resolution despite his and others many trips to Britain, France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy to try and mediate the increasingly vicious conflict. "The federal forces have an advantage of more than 100 to one in firepower, but the Biafrans have the advantage of a morale, which comes from a people who believe they are fighting for survival and basic freedom."

In the 18 months of war from July 1967 to December 1968, three international peace conferences were held — one under the auspices of Canadian Arnold Smith, head of the Commonwealth whom Johnson lobbied incessantly, and two under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity. All were abortive. Prospects for peace were poor despite efforts by the inept OAU

THE WAR BECAME BLOODY AND BITTER, A LOW-TECH STRUGGLE WITH BIAFRAN SOLDIERS CHRONICALLY SHORT OF SUPPLIES

centre of Port Harcourt and the capital, Enugu. Soon five million people were squeezed into a tiny football-shaped enclave of 2,000 sq km around the market town of Umuahia. Gowon boasted the war would be over in two weeks.

The war became bloody and bitter. It was a low-tech struggle with Biafran soldiers chronically short of supplies — going into major battles with 10 bullets each. The Nigerians, heavily armed by Britain and Russia (odd allies in that Cold War period), withheld food supplies, openly stating that food was a legitimate weapon of war. As the Biafrans were pushed back from the best agricultural land into their own barren heartland, and as crops and stores fell into the hands of the Nigerian soldiers, starvation and famine appeared, flapping their wings like the vultures that hovered over the feeding centres and refugee camps. Casualties were huge among civilians; yet, somehow, Biafran morale remained high despite the military campaign going irretrievably wrong.

For the first time in history, the mass media zeroed in on an African humanitarian disaster. New technology and a generation of young, bright, media-savvy church people and NGOs made this possible. Appalled by the magnitude of the Biafran tragedy, we searched for answers. Too often it was all dismissed as a consequence of tribalism. White governments in Britain, the United States and Canada, as well as Europe, could not comprehend. "There are forces let loose in Biafra," stated the *London Sunday Times Magazine*, one of the papers most sympathetic to the Biafran cause, "that white men cannot understand."

But the large European and British oil companies, with billions of dollars of investment in Nigerian-

REV. EDWARD HEWLETT JOHNSON

Ted Johnson is memorialized by the Presbyterian Church in the E.H. Johnson Trust Fund, which continues his ministry of Christian outreach, ecumenism, peace and social justice. Each year since 1981, individuals receive the award for dedication to the cutting edge of mission.

People who knew him well call him their mentor, a special term for a man whose whole life was dedicated to the global world and to change. "Because the gospel calls us to be [with the people] and because Ted wanted us to have room to fly, we did," says Barbara McLean, recently retired deputy clerk of the General Assembly at the Presbyterian national office. She and her husband, Walter, a former Tory cabinet minister in the Joe Clark government, started their ministry in the Eastern Region of Nigeria that would become Biafra. Johnson was their mentor too.

"He came out of the Montreal scene where the SCM was most radical at McGill," recalls Barbara. "Essentially they were Marxists. He was a gold medallist in mathematics and physics and had a passion for the social gospel even though he came from a wealthy background."

He was considered a maverick long before Biafra, Walter McLean agrees. "Once when he came back from a visit to China, he chided the church for its unrelenting anti-Communist view of China and said we could take some lessons in commitment from Mao Tse-tung. That was not the thing to be saying in 1973. He also said Mao was a great humanitarian and had tremendous faith in the individual human being."

Johnson was born in 1909 and, after studying at McGill, Princeton, Berlin and Edinburgh, he was sent to Manchuria in northeast China as a missionary. He was expelled in 1941 by the



invading Japanese forces. Johnson was a youthful rebel and believed the church must change and become more open to youth. He spent post-war years in the United States, working for the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. "Even then," Barbara says, "he was an anti-establishment man with enormous energy and the ability to cut through red tape to make critical decisions. He was one of the few church leaders then to understand the importance of mass media."

Johnson travelled incessantly working for students. He always talked about the great moments of history. "He'd find two or three people who wanted to talk about the world at a time when Canadians were pretty parochial," says Walter. "He was no church bureaucrat; he was a real leader and knew people all over the world who shared his urgency and passion for justice and peace."

"Sadly, today, the church has pulled back from that sense of global mission to bring Christians and the church into the centre of the world. Ted saw institutional preservation almost as a contradiction to the core of the gospel."

Johnson became secretary for overseas missions in 1954 and stayed in that position for more than 20 years. He left a deep mark on his church by insisting and implementing the idea that mission had to change to meet the needs of changing times. "And he shaped Presbyterian mission policy to achieve that change," the McLeans say.

He was elected Moderator in 1969 at the height of the Biafra conflict. He was active, too, in the World Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches, and his ecumenical enthusiasm broadened the horizons of the Presbyterian Church. In addition to Biafra, one of his greatest passions was China, dating back to his days in Manchuria. He spent much of his time interpreting China to Canadians and helped to found the Canada-China program.

"Two of the great nations of the world, China and Nigeria, have the same birthday as I do — October 1," he often joked.

He was well aware of the responsibilities the churches bore in the colonial project in Africa and battled for a more responsive attitude toward post-independence Africa. When the Biafra war ended, Johnson had the difficult task of wrapping up Canairelief and facing the need for the church to rebuild its battered Nigerian mission. He was never allowed back into Nigeria despite many attempts.

Johnson received many awards, including an honorary doctorate from Trent University, Peterborough, Ont., for his Biafran work. But he also left a legacy of controversy. Shortly after he retired as moderator, he was shuffled sideways in 1973 to become secretary of research and planning for the Board of World Mission. He retired in 1978 and died from a fall while walking in 1982.

and its special mediator, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. The Biafran leadership totally mistrusted the OAU because its mediating stance was based on the inviolate premise that existing boundaries of African states at independence must never be altered. Biafra had to return to Nigeria before anything could happen to end the tiny enclave's starvation and abject misery. The Biafrans hoped for intervention by the Soviet Union or the United States to call a truce.

Making peace and feeding the starving

Because of its long connection with the people on both sides of the war, the Presbyterian Church played a unique role in trying to bring humanitarian aid to the suffering and a healing ministry to the whole desperate situation. In 1969, Ted Johnson outlined three lines of activity for the church:

- seek to maintain fellowship and support to our Christian brethren and particularly our fellow Presbyterians on both sides
- engage in a vigorous role in relief work on both sides
- try to promote a peaceful settlement by maintaining contact and conversation on both sides with colleagues who are high in government responsibilities.

While Johnson always accepted the General Board of Mission's policy — “we make no judgment as to the

right or wrong on either side in their conflict; our interest is in the bringing of peace and the relief of suffering to all peoples” — he was widely perceived by the polit-

ical classes in Canada and internationally as being strongly opposed to the Nigerian and British strategy of starving Biafra into submission. His high-profile activities with Canairerelief, his many trips to Nigeria and Biafra, his close ties to Ntiyong (N.U.) Akpan (a committed Presbyterian and principal civilian secretary to Ojukwu) and his high profile in Canada and overseas made him the object of criticism and controversy, not least in his own church where he was both Moderator and secretary for overseas missions. The churches were accused of prolonging the war by their humanitarian activities and of being propagandists for Biafran secession. Johnson, never one to suffer fools gladly, was accused by other bureaucrats of not following proper procedures.

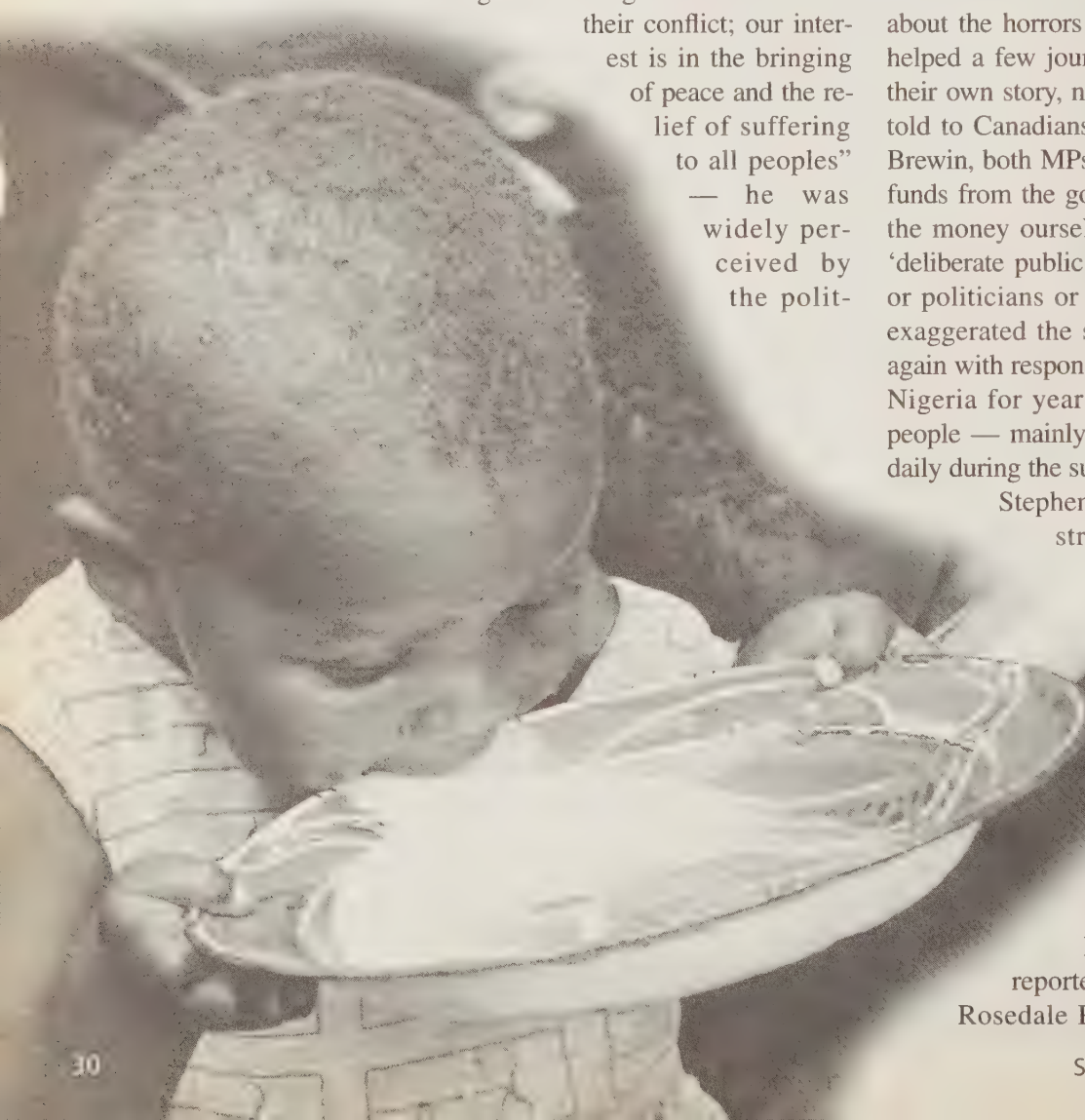
“Look, for a long time, I was pretty much a one-Nigeria man,” he told the *Globe and Mail's* Betty Lee in a 1968 interview. “Now I believe that, if Lagos insists on trying to impose a military solution on the Biafrans, they'll end up with nothing but a mass graveyard and concentration camps. There will be no such thing as what the British want — a quick kill. The Biafrans are fighting a people's war.”

When Lee questioned Johnson about his role as a propagandist, he stated: “That isn't true. About the only public relations was that which got around the world by word of mouth and by the mass media telling the world about the horrors being perpetrated against civilians. I helped a few journalists get into Biafra, but they told their own story, not mine. The real story of Biafra was told to Canadians by David MacDonald and Andrew Brewin, both MPs. We couldn't get humanitarian relief funds from the government so we went out and raised the money ourselves. I suppose that could be called ‘deliberate public relations’ but none of the journalists or politicians or church people who went to Biafra exaggerated the situation. I checked it out time and again with responsible doctors who had been in Eastern Nigeria for years, and there's no doubt that 6,000 people — mainly children and women — were dying daily during the summer.”

Stephen Lewis, now waging a high-profile struggle to stem Africa's HIV/AIDS pandemic (see January 2003 and May 2004 *Record*) also went to Biafra and described the situation in 1968. “The Canadian people and the churches were magnificent in their concern over Biafra,” he wrote. “The government was anti-human.”

Three meals a week

In 1969, Ted Johnson helped this reporter, along with Rev. Eoin Mackay of Rosedale Presbyterian Church, Toronto, and



Rabbi Gunther Plaut of Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto, make a trip into Biafra. As we jumped, literally, from the cargo bays of the DC-6 and were hustled into a dugout in the rich red earth for formal customs and immigration procedures, the first person we met was Johnson. Bombs landed nearby, the Russian Ilyushin bomber known to all as the Intruder was trying to bomb the airlift. With our passports duly stamped, Johnson hustled us into the black African night for an immediate meeting with his friend Akpan and a briefing, then to an abandoned plantation house where the moon shone through the bullet-holed roof. Early the next morning, we awoke to the low drone of wailing children and the all-pervasive smell of death. It never goes away. It stays strong in the memory.

We were in a village called Atani, a market that had been strafed the day before by the Russian MiG fighter jets flown for the Nigerian air force by Egyptian pilots. Cannon shells had burst in the middle of the market. A line of bullets traced their way down the middle of thatched huts. Bodies still lay by the side of the dirt track. It was no military installation. The feeding station and sick bay run by the World Council of Churches was a long, low shed where 300 children, mostly inert, lay on the earth floor on straw mats. Their hair was red, their bellies swollen, their skin scaly and their limbs like bent twigs. Eyes stared blankly from hollow sockets. The low moaning sound that had greeted us the first morning was louder. The children were in constant pain. They were being fed (when it was available) high protein food, milk and a few drops of fish oil flown in on the Jesus Christ Airline and Canairelief.

These were the innocents. They had made no war. Their bodies were ravaged, and their parents were worse. Refugees for two or three years, they were getting three meals a week and they were dying in the bush under thatch, quietly by the side of road. There was not an animal to be seen; they had been eaten long ago. Lizards were a protein treat. Wander off the roads and into the bush almost anywhere in Biafra and the sight of starving people soon became one of the most harrowing sights visitors would see.

The churches were accused of manufacturing these horrendous images to raise money to keep Ojukwu in power. The brutal fact, Johnson told me, was that these and millions more children were innocent victims of an international power play for political influence in Africa and a struggle for control of one of the world's great oil reserves.

The courage of the pilots, the Biafran relief workers who could unload a Super Constellation's 15 tons of aid in 20 minutes in the darkness, and the missionaries and medical staff inside Biafra was incredible. In the September 1968 *Record*, Stanley Burke, host of the CBC's *The National News*, asked angrily why no government would help. "In Africa," Burke wrote, "it seems the rules are different for the rich, white world or

perhaps it's just that our consciences don't relate to the suffering of black people. But when you're here, you feel it so much it hurts. Last year a million people died — more than Britain lost in two world wars. Here there are walking skeletons and the war was being fought with mainly British weapons. Never have I encountered in 21 years as a newsman cynicism and hypocrisy as blatant. That a million or two people should be compelled to die in the name of preservation of 'one country' is surely monstrous."

In the end, international politics and commerce won out. Biafra collapsed. Ojukwu fled. Uli was overgrown

THE COURAGE OF THE PILOTS, THE BIAFRAN RELIEF WORKERS, THE MISSIONARIES AND MEDICAL STAFF WAS INCREDIBLE

with jungle, its simple airport destroyed by Nigerian soldiers. Corpses of the pilots and planes can still be found in the lush Biafran bush.

The humanitarian disasters in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World have grown in magnitude, and emergency relief pioneered by the Jesus Christ Airline and people like Ted Johnson has now become big business. Violence-jaded viewers watch the repetition of Biafra endlessly on their television screens. The comment by Stanley Burke that our society and churches suffer from "compassion fatigue" becomes more incisive daily. Canada still spends less than half of one per cent on Third World development aid. Arms merchants and mercenaries get rich protecting transnational resources from the people who own them. Since Biafra, Africa has been blighted by similar wars in Angola, both Congos, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Chad, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Thirty-five years later, churches no longer play a major role in these catastrophes; but JCA was eventually reborn in 1990, some 20 years after Biafra, into Action by Churches Together (ACT), now based in Geneva. And Ted Johnson died in 1981 at 72. He was one of the giants of his age, mentor to many, acknowledged as Canadian Presbyterianism's most distinguished church leader. He believed utterly that to be Christian was to be at the cutting edge of change and that to do mission was to risk. **R**

Hugh McCullum is a Toronto-based author and journalist who has covered Africa since 1968, when he made his first trip to the continent with Ted Johnson to cover the Biafra conflict. His latest book, *Radical Compassion: The Life and Times of Ted Scott*, was published earlier this year.



Education is a lifelong process

Education equips God's people by the power of the Spirit to share in Christ's ministry in the congregation and beyond

by Judee Archer Green

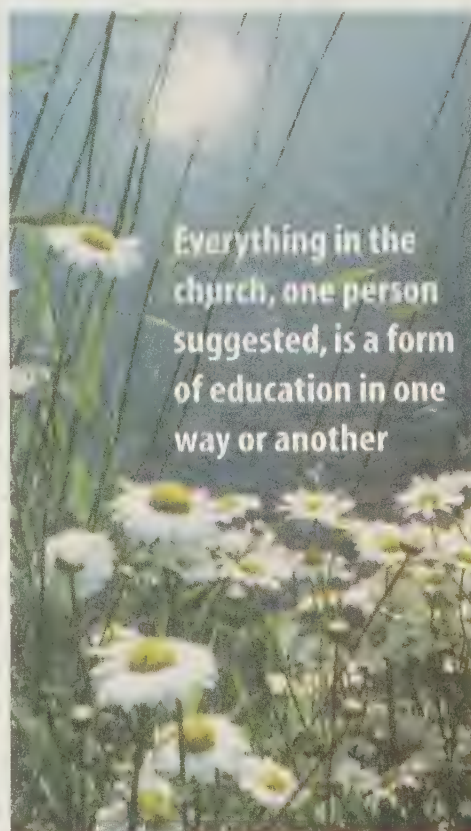
Education is a hallmark of the Reformed tradition of the Christian faith. The emphasis on an educated clergy and laity has long been part of our thinking. The focus for this final year of the FLAMES Initiative is education. This includes all aspects of education — formal and informal — for children, youth, laity, ruling elders, diaconal ministers and clergy. Focusing on these many facets of education requires a wide-angle lens!

It seems appropriate that this theme should conclude the FLAMES Initiative as education gathers up all the previous themes. Any educational program can focus on children and youth, equip laity, foster active evangelism, educate for mission and about justice on the national and international scenes, and deepen personal Christian spirituality.

At the 130th General Assembly, commissioners had the opportunity to consider a number of questions about education. You may wish to use these questions with your session, Christian education committee or discussion group. What follows is a sampling of what commissioners had to say about education.

1. When I think of theological education, I think of ...

The most frequent response was the theological education of clergy at one of our three theological colleges: The Presbyterian College in Montreal, Knox College in Toronto and St. Andrew's Hall, part of the Vancouver School of Theology. Some commented this was hard work, mostly book work and lots of essays! But others emphasized that edu-



cation is not finished at graduation; education is a lifelong process. They mentioned private study and reflection, synod and presbytery workshops and conferences, classes for new members.

Some commissioners thought of theological education as the study of God and the relationship between God and themselves, as well as a study of the roots of the faith. Theological education adds tools to a calling in an atmosphere of stimulating conversation, debate and fellowship.

Theological education also made some think of specific individuals. They named professors in our theological colleges. Theologian Karl Barth even received an honourable mention!

The Elders' Institute, with its various programs, was also mentioned as a way of educating ruling elders in the congregation.

2. What are you doing in education (formal, informal, group, individual) in your congregation, presbytery, synod, etc.?

Commissioners talked about education in their congregations in the church school, Bible studies and discussion groups, through camping and on mission tours. Specific programs, such as Kerygma and Alpha, have been used with success. A number of people mentioned film discussion groups. Some obtained a movie, but others went out as a group to see a movie and then shared responses to such questions as: what image touched you? what was the world view? how did this film challenge you?

Elders retreats, dramatic presentations, multicultural days and small group ministry are educational tools many churches use. Supporting each other in a pastoral way and self-directed reading are more personal ways of learning. Some saw education as a two-way street in the congregation, with clergy learning from the laity and the laity learning from clergy. Others regarded the Sunday morning sermon as an opportunity for education.

Everything in the church, one person suggested, is a form of education in one way or another.

3. What would you like to do?

When commissioners were asked to dream a little, they suggested they would like to learn from more educators and through more travel. Some wanted to learn about other faith groups while others recommended involving 80 per cent of the congregation in some form of study and learning program. Others

Resources

Many items people asked for are already available:

- The Book Room is on the web at www.presbycan.ca/bookroom/index.html
- *Equip* and the *PCPak*, sent to all churches, include resource lists
- PCTalk at www.presbyterian.ca has active online discussion groups
- Monthly education articles in the *Presbyterian Record*
- The education website at www.presbyterian.ca/flames/education will share ideas and resources and point to education events in our church. Let us know what you are doing. Contact Rev. Judee Archer Green at jgreen@presbyterian.ca

dreamed about mentoring programs with youth, drama, camping, environmental studies, discipleship courses, retreats, lay education, and discussion groups around socio-political issues as they relate to faith. More creative and less word-based studies would appeal to some while others suggested in-a-box courses for members of the congregation like those for ruling elders.

4. What would be helpful? Resources? Ideas?

Commissioners at General Assembly who found the time to answer this last question asked for more online, web-based material and training, even satellite connections to congregations. More money for education and suggested ways to generate enthusiasm for learning would help. Others were interested in more videos and books as well as guides to assist them in choosing what resources would be helpful.

In this Year of Education, think about what you can do in your congregation and in your personal life to learn more.

We are God's people
sharing in Christ's ministry
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
educated and equipped
in the congregation and far beyond. **R**

Rev. Judee Archer Green is coordinator of the FLAMES Initiative Year of Education.

Check the Year of Education website at www.presbyterian.ca/flames/education for updates of ideas, resources and events.

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△ The Daughters of Knox, an affiliated group of the WMS from Knox, Acton, Ont., celebrated its 50th anniversary on Mission Awareness Sunday. Pictured at the head table are: (L-R) Renee Watson, president of the Daughters of Knox; Jean Stewart, representing the Brampton presbyterial; and guest speaker Rev. Karen Horst.



△ First Church, Chatham, Ont., received new royal purple choir gowns in memory of choir members Judy Davidson and Betty Hall. Family members, Pam Hall and Mike and Kathy Davidson, are pictured at the dedication.



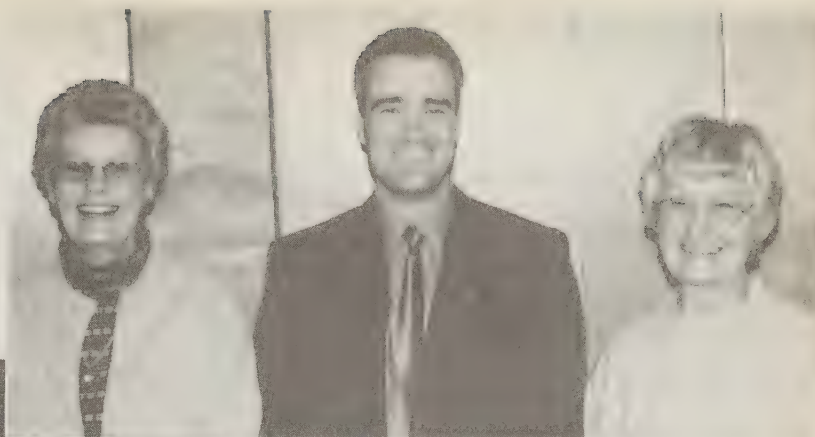
▽ Auke Devries holds a plaque recognizing his 26 years as an elder and faithful member of St. Andrew's, Melbourne, Que., joined by clerk of session Estelle Blouin and Rev. Mark Godin.



△ In May 1966, the congregations of St. Paul's, Erskine and Gorge churches worshipped together for the first time as Trinity Church, Victoria. Since the oldest of the three, Gorge, was founded in 1914, the congregation of Trinity celebrated its 90th anniversary this year. Gathered around the anniversary cake are some of the original members of St. Paul's, Erskine and Gorge: (L-R) Glenda Hunt, Muriel Lockhart, Barbara Chalk, Jean Davidson, Edie Neilson, Allison Colburn, Ruth Katzer and Bob Katzer.

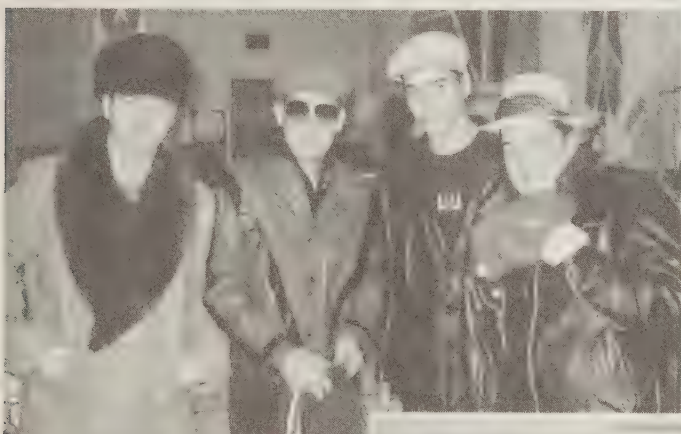
To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Photographs will not be returned. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

Pictured at one of the annual ecumenical Lenten services held by Margaret Rodger Memorial Church, Lachute, Que., are Nancy Boyd (left), president of the Ladies Aid, Rev. David Stewart and Helen Murray, treasurer. The Ladies Aid provides Lenten lunches (soup, fresh bread, dessert) before and after each of the four Thursday services. Proceeds are forwarded to Presbyterian World Service and Development. The church has held the ecumenical services for more than 30 years.



Although they are currently basking in summer weather, the congregation of Trinity, Amherstview, Ont., can remember vividly their participation in last year's Santa Claus parade. For the 14th year, members of Trinity marched in the parade collecting money and food items for the Partners in Mission food bank. Last year, the church collected more than \$3,100 in cash and more than 1,800 kilograms of food.

Rev. Sandy McDonald, moderator of the 129th General Assembly, might have thought he would escape any hot air about his 60th birthday when he was away from his congregation of St. Andrew's, Dartmouth, N.S., on his birthday weekend. However, when he returned, he found 60 balloons in his study, courtesy of the lung power of the church school children.



The youth group of New St. James, London, Ont., held a 30-hour famine that raised almost \$2,500 (matched by World Food Services) to support projects in Tanzania and Ukraine. During the event, youth group members helped out at the rummage sale with, perhaps, predictable results. Left to right: Mike Hovius, Alex Summers, Nick Dawe and Bryan Thiel.



The Church of St. David, Halifax, celebrated the work of the Victorian Order of Nurses with a special service. Pictured: (L-R) Kevin Fraser, VON board member; Mary Ann Seward, staff nurse at the St. David's wellness centre for street people; Dorothy Jackson, St. David's volunteer; Ann Forbes of the VON meal program; and Chris Baert-Wilson, VON staff. The church and the VON entered a partnership in mission in 2003.

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Reading the Bible

Dr. Bradley McLean

ELECTIVE (8:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.)

Global Context and Mission

Dr. Geoffrey Johnston

For more information contact:

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October 29, 30 & November 12, 13, 2004

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October 29, 30

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The Rev. Maria Papp

ELECTIVE

November 12, 13

Worship & Music

Dr. John Derksen

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Pat MacKay 902-752-7430 or patmackay@eastlink.ca

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Knox Presbyterian Church

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October 1, 2

Reading the Bible

Dr. Bradley McLean

ELECTIVES

November 12, 13

Caring for God's People

Dr. Charles Fensham

November 19, 20

Reformed Faith & Spirituality

Dr. Nick Athanasiadis

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October 25 - December 3, 2004

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ELECTIVE

October 25 - December 3

Thinking Theologically

Pam McCarroll,

Adjunct Faculty

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(Wednesdays: 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm)

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Clyde Ervine

THE APOSTLE PAUL

November 4th - December 9th

(Thursdays: 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm)

Instructor: Dr. Michael Pettem, Ph.D in Religious Studies

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Lesson from a mountaintop

Refusing to confess our sins leaves us carrying awkward and heavy burdens

by David Webber

When Linda and I were much younger, we spent a summer on a fire lookout in the Rocky Mountains of southeastern British Columbia. The B.C. Forest Service posted us to Graves Mountain Lookout. It was on a peak close to the Royal Group of mountains near the continental divide between British Columbia and Alberta.

It took a stiff, three-mile climb up the side of the mountain to get to the lookout from the trailhead at the end of the four-wheel-drive road. So our supplies for the summer were flown up by helicopter. We could have had a ride up too, but we had just acquired a young pup, an Airedale terrier named Basil, and I did not want to risk messing with an exuberant pup in the cramped quarters of a helicopter cockpit. We decided I would ride in the chopper with our supplies and, the next day, come down the trail to meet my father and young wife. Together we would walk up with the pup.

The morning of the flight to the lookout, some of my last words before leaving Linda were: "Now you're absolutely sure we have everything packed for the summer, Honey? We don't want to have any heavy packs to deal with for the long hike up the mountain tomorrow."

Linda assured me we had packed everything for the flight. I looked at the Forest Service 4x4 pickup with our mountain of supplies crammed in its box — its axles swayed and its tires were half flat. We must have packed everything. So I blissfully left with all our stuff, drunk with anticipation for the day's adventure of helicopter flying in the Rocky Mountains and setting up a fire lookout for the summer.

The day was long and arduous, with several trips up the mountain by heli-



copter, our supplies slung below in a net. When the pilot finally left, he quipped: "Did you leave anything behind, son? Maybe we should see if we can sling up your 4x4 pickup too?"

My face reddened, but I didn't really care what he thought. I wouldn't see him again. We wouldn't see anyone for two, maybe three months. And when we finally came down from the mountain, having successfully composted our mountain of supplies in the outhouse, we would simply walk out.

The sweat poured off me all day as I packed things away in the lookout and removed shutters from the wall-to-wall windows of our new four-metre-square home.

I did not sleep well that night. Ten thousand feet of elevation is no laughing matter until you acclimatize to it. Doing the simplest physical tasks is rough going.

The next morning, I was up early and off down the steep trail to meet Linda, Dad and Basil. I expected to meet them about halfway up the trail, enjoying a leisurely and unencumbered walk. Instead, I met them almost at the trailhead. Dad had a pack the size of a truck on his back, and Linda had a large heavy paper shopping bag on each arm. Only our pup was having an enjoyable time.

Now before I learned the marital art of verbal sparing, I used to resort to ranting and raving at times like these. "I thought

you said we had everything packed for the chopper,” I screamed. “Where did all this stuff come from? It’s going to take us hours to make it up the mountain. You can’t pack heavy shopping bags in your arms three miles straight up a 10,000-foot mountain, Linda.”

At my outburst, Linda broke down and cried. (This was before she learned the marital art of verbal sparing — and after 32 years of practice, she is better at it than anyone I know.) Dad just puffed on by us with the huge pack, and I took the two heavy shopping bags from Linda. Several hours and gallons of sweat later, we topped out on the mountain.

I was exhausted. Not only were the paper shopping bags heavy but they were an awkward burden to carry that far up a steep mountain trail, and at that altitude. I ached everywhere. Linda unpacked the bags as soon as I flopped them down on the floor of the lookout. They contained pots of dirt in which Linda’s mom had started radishes, lettuce and other garden vegetables, just in case we ran short of supplies and began to starve on the mountain.

“You mean to tell me I just packed 50 pounds of dirt in my arms up a 10,000-foot mountain?” I screamed.

“Well, no, not just dirt,” Linda said defensively. “There are also these.” She reached into one of the bags and pulled out the dog’s Frisbee, ball and security blanket.

I screamed. Linda cried. Dad made himself scarce. Basil hid under the bed. I remember that day as the single worst moment of 32 otherwise pretty good years of marriage.

That day, I graphically and metaphorically learned the destructive power of heavy, awkward and useless burdens carried through rough terrain. Since that day, I have learned there is no more destructive, heavy, awkward and useless burden than sin carried through the often rough terrain of human life. And no one learned this lesson better than “the man after God’s own heart,” the Psalmist and fellow sinner King David of Israel. His great lesson is transparently displayed in the Psalms.

Despite the many debates of biblical scholars, ancient tradition has it that Psalm 32 is a companion to Psalm 51

and shares the context of David’s affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). And tradition has Psalm 32 carry “A Maskil” in its heading. A maskil is a teaching song bearing a lesson for wisdom and spirituality. So ancient tradition gives a context and states a purpose for Psalm 32. The context is that David lusted after an army commander’s wife, committed adultery with her, got her pregnant, made the husband drunk, had him killed and then covered up the whole affair. For at least a year or more, he kept silent about his sin. It was all pent up inside him like some awkward and heavy burden. In Psalm 32,

There is no more destructive, heavy, awkward and useless burden than sin carried through the often rough terrain of human life

he confessed: “While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night [God’s] hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer” (Psalm 32:3-4).

What happened to David when he refused to confess his sins? He laboured under an awkward, heavy burden. He suffered spiritually (Psalm 51), but he also suffered physically. According to his own words in Psalm 32, he became like an old man. God’s hand of conviction was heavy upon him day and night. He “dried up” like a creek in a drought.

I read somewhere that people who go to the doctor to take care of their symptoms should perhaps go to the Lord to take care of their sins. This does not mean all sickness is caused by sin, but it does mean unconfessed sin can cause not only spiritual and mental anguish but real physical affliction, as Paul attests to in 1 Corinthians 11:29-32. Holding sin inside and trying to hide it can literally make us ill and consume us. It becomes a heavy, awkward and useless burden, tiring and destroying us. Silence about sin leads to one place: conviction. The conscience is powerful and must be dealt with.

How do we deal with conviction? How can we remove the heavy burden?

There is but one way: “Then I acknowledged my sin to [God], and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

David confessed his sin — eventually. Literally, he says to God, “I began to make known to you my sin.” David allowed the Spirit of God to uncover his sins one by one privately. And one by one, he confessed them. David’s prayer was no mere general confession. He named his sins specifically as God showed them to him through his conscience. Then God revealed to David that he was forgiven completely.

It has been said that the less you spare yourself, the more God will spare you. That’s another way of saying what the apostle Paul said: “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged” (1 Corinthians 11:31).¹ God does not forgive us because we feel guilty or sorry, or because we pray, as important and crucial as these may be; God forgives us when we confess our sins because he is “faithful and just.” God is faithful to his promise and just with reference to the cross of Christ. When we cry out in our sins and bare them completely to God, he will not make us pay for sins that Christ has already paid for. God removes the sin and the burden. David made that clear in Psalm 32:5b: “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”

The spiritual truth is, the heavy, awkward, destructive burden of sin can be dealt with. The spiritual discipline of confession to God, and to others hurt by our sin, will remove it. Why carry the horrible burden any longer? We, too, can sing with David: “Oh, what joy for those whose rebellion is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of sin, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!” (Psalm 32:1-2).² **R**

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter’s Aspen: Embracing the Creator’s Fire*.

¹ The New King James Version

² New Living Translation

Crack of the bat

The boys seemed surprised at the level of my concern about the autographed bats

I love baseball. The roar of the crowd. The crack of the bat. The taste of the hotdogs. OK, I'm lying about the hotdogs, but I do love baseball. I enjoy watching men play their hearts out for the sheer love of the game. Or perhaps the \$250 million has something to do with it.

When I was a boy, my Little League coaches kept telling us they didn't get paid and were on their own time, so we should smarten up, pay attention and keep our eyes on the ball. Still, I loved the game. In fact, I spent most of my waking moments at elementary school either trimming the pigtails on the girl in front of me or dreaming of baseball. *If only I could make it to the big leagues*, I thought, *ah ... if only. But it never happened.* Until recently.

Last September, I found myself hanging out with members of Major League Baseball's Toronto Blue Jays. Mike Matheny (who now catches for the St. Louis Cardinals) and I were on a television show together and, after a few minutes of conversation, Mike said, "Why don't you come and have a chapel with the team?" I gulped, then quickly agreed.

Walking timidly through the hallowed halls of the SkyDome, I kept asking myself what I was doing there. I'm the guy who struck out in the ninth inning.

"We didn't ask you to come and pitch, Phil," David Fisher, the chaplain, reminded me. "Just tell stories."

The room where we met was brightly upholstered for families. Books, videos and children's toys were stacked neatly, making it a welcome spot for the players' wives and little ones during home games. The players filed in, shaking my hand and introducing themselves.

After David told them who I was, I began nervously. "I wanted to be like you guys — a professional athlete. And I

probably could have made it except I lacked ... well, the body and the coordination." They laughed in approval.

Surrounded by millionaires, I spent 20 minutes telling them stories of my life. Of scoring the overtime goal in our championship hockey game. Into my own net. I talked of the joys of child rearing and the richness of relationships. Tears rolled down the face of one famous player as I described my wife's battle with seizures and how the valley of shadows had drawn us closer to God. And to each other. I told them of my faith in Jesus — not a stuffy religion, but a vital relationship that impacts everything I do and say.

Bats crack, cars rust, paint peels, appliances quit, but people live forever

Afterwards, Mike asked me how many children I have. I should have told him 11 but I had to tell the truth. He disappeared for a few minutes, then returned carrying three autographed baseball bats — one for each of the kids. "Whoa," I said, "you won't believe how much they'll love these. My eldest son eats, sleeps and dreams baseball."

The next day, after managing to get the bats aboard a commercial airline (try it sometime), I carried them through the front door to squeals of delight. At first, I thought the kids were glad to see me, but they were looking at the bats. For them, it was Christmas in September. That night, I fell asleep thinking about the bats. And I must admit I thought a time or two of their value, and it brought a greedy smile to my face.

I told a few friends about the bats the next morning but, upon arriving home

from work, I discovered the two boys in the backyard with the bats, hitting various hard objects (including each other) — and smudging the autographs. I was not a happy father. I yelled a little at first, then took to hollering.

The boys seemed surprised at the level of my concern, but I informed them the bats were worth a lot of money. I could get on the Internet and raffle them off to pay for their college tuitions — but I wouldn't. Instead, I would make them labour in an Alaska coal mine while their friends became doctors and lawyers and leaders of the free world.

OK, I didn't say all that, but I felt like it. As I lay in bed that night thinking about the situation, a thought came out of nowhere and smacked me between the ears: "Phil, those bats are pieces of wood. They will burn one day. Your kids are worth more than that, aren't they?"

Pushing the warm covers away, I tiptoed down to the boys' room and did what I've done numerous times since the birth of our first child, "I'm sorry, guys," I said. "I was wrong." And I slept a little better without the greedy smile.

"Cast but a glance at riches," said Solomon in Proverbs 23:4-5, "and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle."

Henry David Thoreau put it this way: "Money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul."

Bats crack. Cars rust. Paint peels. Appliances quit. But people live forever. If ever I need a reminder, I will tiptoe downstairs into my sons' room, pick up some bats and try my best to read the autographs. **B**

Phil Callaway is editor of *Prairie Bible Institute's Servant* magazine, and an author and speaker. His website is www.philcallaway.com.

Maintaining faith in a cradle of Presbyterianism

The Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry

by Tom Dickey

It was the morning of July 1, 1958 (known then as Dominion Day), and something was about to happen that would change the ebb and flow of daily life for thousands of people in eastern Ontario. At 8 o'clock, a large cofferdam, not far from Cornwall, would be blown apart, releasing a torrent of water across the countryside. Several small villages and hamlets, with such wonderful names as Moulinette, Dickinson's Landing, Maple Grove and Farran's Point, would be submerged and lost forever — collateral damage of the St. Lawrence Seaway project. The town of Iroquois would be

In name, the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry is a mere pup, but in actual age it is an old dog that has been forced to learn new tricks

rebuilt a mile back from the water, a destroyed section of Morrisburg would be replaced by a new development and two new towns, Ingleside and Long Sault, would be created. In the end, more than 6,500 people were displaced.

Although the flooding left permanent creases on the face of the community, its features stayed pretty much the same. Located in a part of the country first settled by United Empire Loyalists in the late 18th century, the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry, despite dwindling numbers, remains home to many congregations whose faith has withstood the tests of time. In name, the presbytery is a mere pup, born 10 years ago with the amalgamation of the presbyteries of Brockville and Glengarry. But in actual age, it is an old dog that has been forced to learn a few new tricks to survive. Anyone who has visited Upper Canada Village, the recreated 1860s community located near Morrisburg, will have an idea of the kind of hard-working folk who founded the area.

According to the definitive history *The Kirk in Glengarry* by Presbyterian minister and scholar Rev. Dr. Donald N. MacMillan, the Presbytery of Glengarry came into being in 1831. The birthdate of the Presbytery of Brockville is uncertain, but it is known that Rev. William Smart commenced work in the city of Brockville in 1811. Other figures who played a key role in establishing Presbyterianism in the region included Rev. John



First Church, Brockville, Ont.

Bethune and Rev. Robert Boyd. Mr. Bethune, who arrived in Glengarry in 1787, is described by Dr. MacMillan as the father of Presbyterianism in Upper Canada. The only resident Presbyterian minister in Upper Canada when it was established as a separate province in 1791, Mr. Bethune was the sole ministerial representative of the Church of Scotland for nearly a quarter of a century. Mr. Boyd, known as the Apostle of Grenville County, arrived in Prescott from Ireland in 1819 and went on to establish 14 mission stations throughout the area.

It is interesting to note the Glengarry region has provided literary inspiration for Presbyterian ministers other than Dr. MacMillan. Rev. Charles W. Gordon, himself the son of a Presbyterian minister, will be familiar to some readers as Ralph Connor, the author of *Glengarry School Days* and *The Man from Glengarry*. (We don't know if the environment has

had any literary effect on sermons in the area.)

The Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry stretches from the Church of the Covenant, Lansdowne, in the west, east along the St. Lawrence River to St. Andrew's, South Lancaster (close to the Quebec border), north to St. Paul's, Hawkesbury (next door to Quebec), and south and west to St. Paul's, Kemptville. Something of the presbytery's character can be found in its composition. Of the 29 congregations in the presbytery, only two are city congregations: St. John's, Cornwall, and First, Brockville. There is one other single charge (St. Matthew's, Ingleside), 10 two-point charges and two three-point charges.

With mostly town and rural congregations, and a small membership base, it should come as no surprise that the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry finds itself saddled with a familiar burden: how to meet the increasing financial cost of ministry. The presbytery has begun the (proverbial Presbyterian) process of visioning to help determine the direction of ministry within its bounds. The goal is

to ensure that the mission and ministry of the church are not simply maintained but enhanced.

In the meantime, the presbytery is doing what it can to build bridges over troubled waters. One recent event sponsored by the mission committee took place under a tent along the St. Lawrence River. Two ministers with first-hand knowledge of the state of the church, former moderator Rev. Dr. Sandy McDonald and Rev. Dr. Jim Czegledi of the Life and Mission Agency, were the day's guest speakers. It was, by all accounts, an uplifting event and, if tents can echo, then this one did — with song, laughter and conversation.

Another positive sign can be found at Knox, Vankleek Hill, a small town of 1,800 that bills itself as the Gingerbread Capital of the World. The congregation has hired Kim Webster as a full-time youth worker, and the results can already be seen. As the staff person for the Focus on Youth program, she coordinates a grades 6 through 8 youth night, high school dinner nights, special events and retreats. A monthly free lunch for high

school students from September to June regularly attracts up to 100 youth. (Incidentally, if you're wondering if being the gingerbread capital of the world helps to bring younger children to events, the title refers to local architecture and not the stuff that goes so well with whipped cream.)

Knox Church is also active in other forms of outreach, including a food bank and programs for the community. The age spectrum is well covered, with Mothers and Tots and Watch Me Grow for those at one end, to foot clinics for those at the other.

There are other indications of growth. St. Andrew's, South Lancaster, has recently added a new Christian education centre to its church building. St. John's, Cornwall, the largest congregation in the presbytery, has refurbished and rededicated its sanctuary.

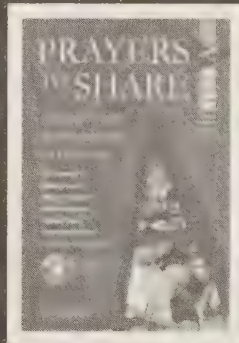
And so, life in the Presbytery of Seaway-Glengarry continues to ebb and flow. Those within its bounds are doing what they can to ensure its future, while continuing to draw inspiration from its past. **R**

Rita at her piano

Her piano's like a diary
constantly rewritten.
She taps the low bass notes
of that visit to the refugee camp,
makes mournful chords
of swollen bellies, bulging eyes.
But then her fingers wander toward
the centre of the keys,
a smile here, a warm hand there,
a melody of difference
be it food or medicine
or even a shared and hopeful prayer.
She cannot quite bring herself
to dabble in the upper range just yet,
the high sweet pitch that levitates
the hard weight of this world.
She just contents herself
that somehow, some way,
that song is coming.

— John Grey

RESOURCES TO RESPOND TO



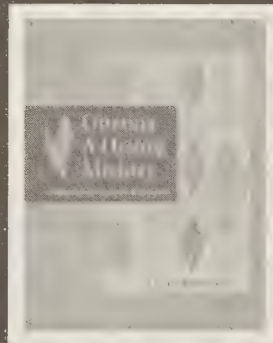
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We need a Jubilee Year

Dear Editor:

September has once more taken us by surprise. The pomp and pageantry of General Assembly, harbinger of the season when we tend to allow God to manage on his own, has been reduced to stitched minutes. (Any word on the proposed TV series? "Reality" programming is hot, but I don't think *PCC Blue* is original enough as a working title.)

So, too, have we lived through a shift of mood as many cheerful campaign signs soon became relics of faded hope, along with the candidates who will not be going to Ottawa and some who will.

The dog days of summer (no, not the Expos schedule) have left behind pews littered with generic orders of service (oft called "bulletins," though they seldom speak of urgent and fast-breaking news). The spice rack of variety has produced guest preachers, some as odd as turmeric and others as familiar and exciting as parsley.

Attempts have been made to lure the seasonally faithful with promises of a quick release from the torment of worshipping God when the temperature is high and the sun shines. "Sermons under 10 minutes or your offering back, plus a minimum of three funny illustrations!" "Oversize bulletins [see above] prefolded for fanning!" "No hymn with more than three verses!" "Valet parking!" (OK, maybe the last example slips into hyperbole.)

But now, but now, we must — and how satisfying this is to the Presbyterian conscience! — we must pay the price for our frivolity. Congregational treasurers, or someone appointed to speak for them, will sound the alarm that binds most of us together — perhaps the last bit of glue adhering to a system that slides from Presbyterianism to congregationalist anarchy. With ashen but grimly smiling

faces, spokespersons will rise to announce the devastation to the budget wrought by the snow-free months.

"Folks, we're in a bit of a bind. We've been in difficult straits before, and your board of managers/finance committee has every confidence (*cough, and clearing of throat*) that we can rise to the challenge again! The bank has been kind in allowing us to extend our overdraft, but at a killing rate of interest. Not as many

**If we *are* going to Heaven
in a handbasket, let it be
well crafted**

of you as we had hoped availed yourselves of postdated cheques or authorized monthly withdrawals from your accounts. Our thanks to both of you who did. We are in a delicate position if we want to maintain" *even our precarious standing*, but this is better left unsaid, "our ability to meet our designated responsibilities" *approved by the 37 per cent of you who attended the annual congregational meeting*, but this is also better left unsaid. "We know that you respond to the Christmas/Year-end/Gasp-for-Breath-Life-Extending-Challenge, but could you help us NOW? Our staff, the government, presbytery and Wynford Drive are allergic to latex cheques. The microwave in the kitchen has been declared a hazard to those of child-bearing age. And the Sunday school really can't make three-centimetre pieces of chalk do for another year." (Or words to that effect.)

Other problems, not a matter of money but of people, can be as troublesome. Where are the needed Christian education committee members and Sunday

school teachers to come from? Exclusively from people who have children of the appropriate age? "Be fruitful and multiply and inherit nursery duty" (Genesis 9:1, alt.). From women and men who teach as their vocation but understandably balk at a *sixth* day of duty? Who among us are ready to be exposed to criticism for whatever we do from people who would have "done it differently" if *they* had been asked but who, modestly but unbiblically, kept their light beneath a bushel? How do we invite people to become "professing members" without branding them? And MOST important, how do we convince people that churches occupy "serious ground"?

I think, mine editor, we need a Jubilee Year — different from the one mandated in the Old Testament but not in principle. It was to happen every 50 years and, casting back, 1954 was as good as any other year as a high-water mark for us. We could use another — even a medium-water mark. Without going into more detail (our readers can look it up for themselves: turn right at Exodus and skip over the other "divers laws and ordinances" until you come to Leviticus 25), it was a year of rest from a lot of things.

And we do need a rest, not least from schemes and visions of grandeur. If we *are* to go to Heaven in a handbasket, a small but useful container, let it be well crafted, aesthetically pleasing and constructed with use and purpose in mind — not some carryall of synthetic material, offered as a mindlessly redundant "free gift" in exchange for signing up.

Yours for quiet jubilation,



called to wonder

Created by Erin Walton,
First Church, Edmonton

God created the Earth for us to live on. We are all part of the "global community." We are also part of other smaller communities such as family, church, school and clubs. Being part of a community means you belong and you help others to belong too.

Find your way to the global community God created in the maze. When you complete it, reward yourself by making the mini-global community treats, then share them with someone in your community!

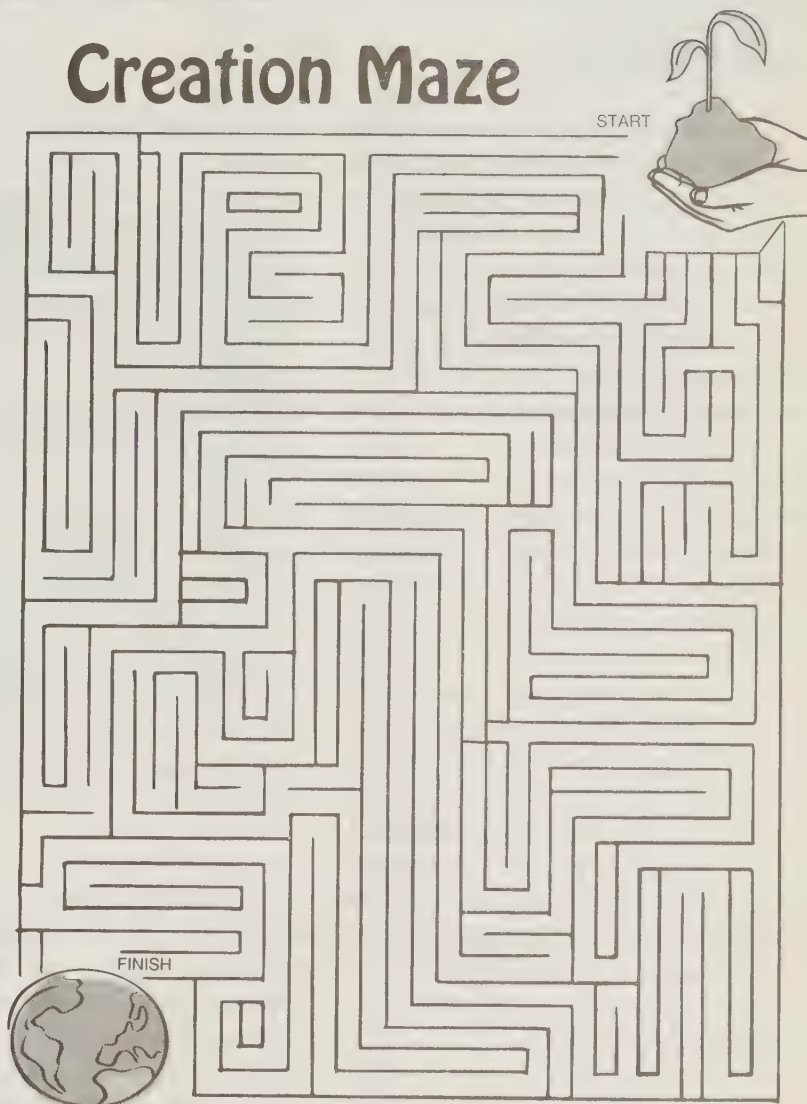
Being part of a community is a lot of responsibility. Follow the GOD rule in your community to help others feel that they belong.

The GOD rule

Give the person speaking your full attention
Only use righteous words
Don't be a space invader (respect the other person's space and do not do any unwanted touching)

Learn more about our global community and the children in it online at:
www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html

Creation Maze



Global community treats

This is a basic Rice Krispies squares recipe with food colouring added. (Ask an adult to help.)

1/4 cup margarine
40 regular marshmallows
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
6 cups Rice Krispies
Green and blue food colouring

Melt margarine and marshmallows over medium heat in a large pot. Stir in vanilla and Rice Krispies. Divide into two bowls. Add green food colouring to one bowl and blue food colouring to the second. Stir. Take a scoop from the blue bowl and a scoop from the green bowl and mash them together in a ball — the Earth! Set the balls aside until completely cool. Enjoy!

Does the church need celebrity power?

There's competition today to get the Christian message heard

by Andrew Faiz

What the church needs is a Madonna. Not the Blessed Virgin of biblical lore, but the pop singer who is now a proponent of kabbalah. Her Re-invention Tour — which you can catch for a hundred or two per seat — bears a kabbalah icon illustrating the myriad levels of the soul. Kabbalistic quotes, in Hebrew no less, flash on the screen during the performance. And you can buy some kabbalah literature and merchandise along with the usual T-shirt and munchies from concert vendors. When it comes to reinvention, Madonna knows her stuff: she started out as the Material Girl, published a book of her nude pictures called *Sex* and made some steamy videos to promote *Vogue*. Her latest reinvention is to be spiritual.

She has preached to (and apparently converted) Britney Spears (who needed some spiritual guidance), Victoria and David Beckham and Demi Moore, who then converted Ashton Kutcher. Moore also spoke about her new faith to Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu on the set of *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*. No news of their interest. Madonna failed to convince Gwyneth Paltrow, but that might be her only setback. Her old girlfriend Sandra Bernhard, the comedian, seems to be the catalyst. She converted Roseanne Barr, who says it is cool “to think of something bigger than yourself.” This is the same Roseanne who, when she had an eponymous sitcom, believed there was nothing on the planet bigger than herself. She now recites kabbalistic verses while stuck in traffic, of which there is plenty in la-la land. Even Faye Resnick, whom you may recall from the O.J. Simpson case, has been going to kabbalah services in Los Angeles.

“I’m glad that people in Hollywood are looking for something besides showbiz to make the world a good and better place,” says Barr. “It’s good when it’s a visible person who says it’s changed their lives. People can see examples.” And what greater example than a Hollywood personality!

A Vatican committee has highlighted “kabbalah, as espoused by Madonna” among a growing list of New Age and faddish beliefs that might threaten Christianity. One wit noted: “In the past, the Pope has criticized Madonna for the

In the marketplace of spiritual choices, our faith is only one of a myriad on the shelf


contents of her concerts. Now, ironically, it’s become a theological issue.” When asked by a radio DJ if there is anyone on Earth more famous than her, the newly spiritualized pop singer named God. The DJ asked her what she’s doing to eclipse him. “Nothing,” she said. “We’re teaming up.” That’s celebrity power.

A year ago, more than 1,000 people in Toronto joined Woody Harrelson in a public declaration of their spirituality. Woody is a vegetarian, a pro-marijuana advocate and a yoga master. It was the latter avocation that brought out the multitudes. A friend who participated in the event told me his Downward Dog was one of the best she’d ever seen. Membership at yoga centres climbed in the wake of his whirlwind visit.

Yoga, according to a website for a Toronto studio, is “a 5,000-year-old practice that is traditionally used to create self-awareness and inner peace.” Among its noted benefits, “it improves balance

and coordination, lubricates the skeletal system, massages and activates inner organs, reduces stress, controls weight and pain, and creates self-confidence.” Kabbalah, according to a website, “is the oldest, the most influential wisdom in all of human history. It answers questions. It provides solutions. It unravels puzzles. It deciphers codes. It gives you practical tools to effect change. And it creates order out of chaos.”

This is the marketplace of spiritual choices. And like all Western marketplaces, it glimmers with celebrity power promising personal satisfaction. In this marketplace, our faith is only one of a myriad on the shelf. But ours lacks a sense of marketing — and it lacks a sexy, cool and hip spokesperson. The best we can manage is Mel Gibson scaring people into believing.

What we need is a reinvention of our own — as Madonna well knows, reinvention is survival in the pop cultural marketplace. Or we could learn to declare our faith with a greater confidence. We are, after all, a 2,000-year-old faith that delivers personal salvation, world peace and pure love as well as crustless egg sandwiches and lemon squares at all social events. And church bake sale lemon squares are the best thing on the planet. Let kabbalah top that. 

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

Thanks to all the kind souls who corrected my historical errors when writing about the King James Bible (July/August *Record*). James died of a stroke in 1625; it was his successor, Charles, who was beheaded in 1649. — Andrew Faiz

Innovative apologetics can dislodge stereotypes and disturb apathy

by Alex MacLeod

Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today by John G. Stackhouse Jr.
(Oxford, 2002, ISBN 0-19-513807-4, 280 pp., \$42.50).

I heard about a 10-year-old girl who attends a Presbyterian church in downtown Toronto. One day, her friend announced, "My parents say your Bible is full of lies, and I'm not going to play with you anymore."

I told this story to children in a church where I was preaching and solicited their feedback. What would they have said if they had been in this girl's shoes? They offered three responses:

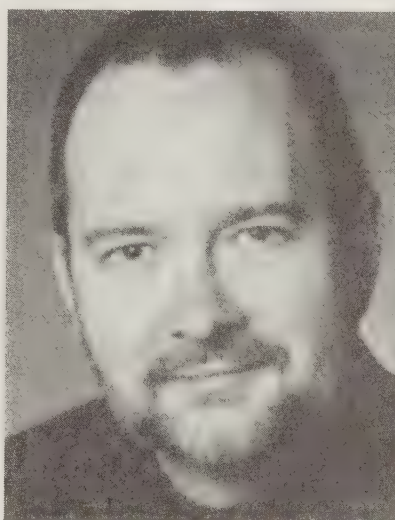
- (1) "I'm not sure, but she couldn't tell her friend she's wrong. That's her friend's view, and it's OK for her to believe that."
- (2) "I would say I still wanted to play with her and be her friend."
- (3) "I would ask her why she thinks that and if she has ever read the Bible."

The third of these options (the best, in my opinion) sets the stage for what theologians call "apologetics" — the challenge of offering a defence, an *apologia*, for Christian belief.

In *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today*, John G. Stackhouse Jr. does a masterful job of outlining how changes in the culture around us call for a new approach to the challenge of explaining and defending Christian faith. Above all, he says, love and humility must mark the way forward.

Stackhouse, a professor of theology and culture at Regent College, Vancouver, takes seriously the task of preparing people for the wide-ranging task of "defending and commending" their faith. His numerous books make this clear as do the frequent demands of the media for his lucid and compelling insights into religious issues.

In conversation with the *Record*,



John G. Stackhouse Jr.

Stackhouse explains that his book is "for thoughtful people who want to defend and commend their faith to others but who are uncomfortable with one mode of apologetics; namely, apologetics as martial arts. In the Canadian church, there are lots of Christians who want to testify to their faith, but many have yet to find a satisfactory mode or style in which to do this."

Winning the debate over a question such as the existence of God can actually undermine the larger goal of presenting Christian faith as attractive and worthy of investigation if the focus on nurturing relationships is lost. Stackhouse adeptly describes how pluralism, postmodernism and consumerism, among other developments in western culture, have transformed our environment and made it necessary to move away from a pointed focus on proving the rational and coherent nature of Christianity.

Humble apologetics is "anything that helps people take Christianity more seriously than they did before," rather than the narrow persuasion of others to accept

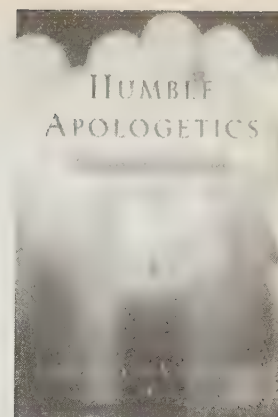
Christian truth. Conversion remains the goal of apologetics, but only God can accomplish that. This realization frees believers from feeling inadequate to the challenge of winning people over and allows them to see the broad potential for an apologetic spirit pervading Christian life.

Art, politics, literature, justice, science, architecture and the overall shape of Christian community can all bear witness to what is most central to the faith. Stackhouse argues that not only is this good theology (and especially consonant with the Presbyterian tradition) but it also addresses the widespread lack of interest among most North Americans in what the church has to say.

The quandary is that people either already consider themselves to be Christians or think they know what to expect from the church — and they reject it. Both assumptions often arise from a skewed impression of Christianity as either easy and accommodating or arrogant and power-hungry. An innovative apologetics aims to jump out of the stale cake of old-time religion with a convincing surprise so as to dislodge these particular stereotypes and disturb the general state of apathy.

Stackhouse suggests that "the diffidence and confusion that many Christians feel today comes from the belief that, if I'm not certain about what to say and can't take on all comers, I must stay meekly quiet when people question my faith. I want to say, first, that no one is certain beyond a doubt; second, that the task of the Christian is love, not warfare and conquest; and, third, that disagreement can be healthy."

The issue of world religions illustrates the dilemma. When the Dalai Lama says all religions are basically the same, how should a Christian respond? It would not be humble to storm out angrily; yet, the



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eyes-glazed-over nodding assent that tends to prevail in response to such interfaith assertions seems equally inadequate.

Stackhouse asserts that we need to learn from other faiths. As good citizens in a pluralistic society, we should love our neighbours with tolerance and respect. The attitude that Christianity alone is good and everything else is bad only shows the church up as "naive and even foolishly dogmatic." But, just as adamantly, *Humble Apologetics* contends that it is impossible and even dangerous "to bracket out our religious differences indefinitely, relegating them to some private zone that will never interfere with someone else's ... Religions insist on their views of ultimate matters because it ultimately matters what you believe."

Knee-jerk tolerance actually weakens our social fabric by ignoring the deep need for communication and greater interdependence among groups that are all too divided. Stackhouse warns against a short-sighted abandonment of "honest and searching dialogue that might result in someone actually changing his or her mind for the better."

Christians need to change their minds too. And churches could use more education and preaching on apologetics that starts with "us," rather than rushing out to convert the elusive "them." New ways of defending the faith and age-old answers to questions about the truth of Christianity help to address doubt and uncertainty within the church even as they are essential to a persuasive interaction with the wider culture.

As the church embraces a more creative apologetics with integrity and humility, the urge to share the gospel in diverse ways will grow — and the openness of others may follow. This book by John Stackhouse is just the tonic. **R**

Alex MacLeod lives in downtown Toronto where he works with young adults at Knox Church (Spadina).

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Agar, Rev. Gordon, 90, passed away, Carewest Signal Pointe Home, Calgary, May 24, 2004. Gordon was raised in Nashville, Ont. He received his BA (University of Toronto, 1938), studied at Knox College and was ordained in 1941. As a student, Gordon served mission churches in Webbwood and Massey, Ont., Hunter's Point, Que., Cranberry Portage, Man., Kinistino, Sask. As an ordained minister, he served in Port Alberni, B.C., and Harriston, Ont., before taking his family to central India to serve as a missionary (1947-1953). After returning to Canada, he ministered in Tisdale, Sask., King City, Ont., Thamesville, Ont., Red Deer, Alta. From 1974 until retirement (1985), he was a chaplain in Toronto hospitals. He excelled at engaging those most in need of spiritual support, providing comfort to many. Gordon's legacy of generosity and community service lives on in his family. He is survived by his wife, Isabelle (Gillanders), daughter Ruth (Doug Smith), sons John (Narda Waters) and James (Shona Ward), 10 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and sisters Mary Porter, Anne Knowlton and Lenore Livingston. He was predeceased by his daughter Mary (husband Mike O'Connor) April 1, 2004, sister Alice Beedham and brother Gilbert. The funeral was held in St. Andrew's Church. Interment, Queen's Park Cemetery.

Glassco, William, 84, who attended for 74 years and was a 50-year member at First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

McElwain, The Rev. Dr. William Irwin, 79, died June 17, 2004. Beloved husband of Mary, father of Mark (Susan), grandfather of Alexandra and Jennifer. Graduate of University of Toronto, Knox College (Class of 1949) and Princeton Theological Seminary, he served in the following charges: Little Harbour and Pictou Landing; St. Giles and Laurel Lea, Sarnia; First, Verdun; St. Andrew's, Newmarket; St. Stephen's, Scarborough; Westminster, Ottawa; and St. Giles, St. Catharines.

At the congregational level, he will be remembered as a builder, especially of Christian education facilities and of programs to help nurture the membership and reach out to the community. He brought a considerate and thoughtful approach to his ministry, managing to challenge people with a mix of generosity and an active sense of humour.

At a wider level, he brought his thorough understanding of the local parish to the leadership of several national committees and boards, including Stewardship, Christian Education, Ministry, and Camping, authoring program materials for each. He was director of the first Presbyterian Music Camp in 1971. Bill was secretary and later convener for Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, at a key time in its growth. He participated with

vigour in church courts at all levels: as moderator of two synods and clerk of another, and at some 29 General Assemblies. He was active in ecumenical efforts at the national and local levels.

Bill was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*) in 1989 from Knox College. After his initial "retirement" in 1991, he served on an interim basis in Hong Kong and Niagara. Earlier he was student minister at Carragana, Sask.; Boston and Omagh, Ont.; Kouchibouguac and Black River, N.B. Funeral service was held in Knox Church, St. Catharines, with interment in Caledon East, Ont.

Bill was truly a man of God. With his kindness, integrity and diligence, he enriched the lives of many over the years.

McNabb, Rev. Maurice D., was called home from Vernon, B.C., to be with his Lord on April 1, 2004, at the age of 90. During 40 years of ministry, he served with the congregations of Woodlands, Farran's Point and Aultsville (now Ingleside), Mount Forest and Conn, Bluevale and Belmore, Port Elgin and Queen Hill and later Burgoyne, Ont.; Prince Rupert, B.C.; St. Andrew's, Brandon, Man.; St. Stephen's, Regina; and as stated supply with Knox, Lloydminster, Alta. He is survived by his wife, Lillian, and several nieces and nephews.

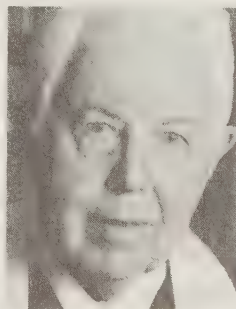
Muir, Rev. A.C. Grant, 82, died peacefully on July 1, 2004, in Woodstock, Ont. Born and raised on a farm near Ceylon, Ont., it was while overseas during World War II that he grew certain of his call to ministry. Grant obtained a BA from the University of Toronto, graduated from Knox College in 1950 and was ordained at St. Andrew's, Priceville. Prior to graduation, he spent summers serving the congregations of St. Giles and Meadowlea in Sarnia, Ont.; Bar River and Sowerby, Ont.; and Orangedale, River Denys and Malagawatch, N.S. From 1950 to 1990, Grant ministered in Essa Road, Barrie and Stroud; St. James on Dawes Road, Toronto; Mackay, Timmins; and Knox, Embro, and Knox, Harrington.

Active on presbytery, synod and national committees, he also fostered a keen interest in Christian camping. Grant served as chaplain to the 48th Highlanders of Canada and branches of the Royal Canadian Legion in East York, Timmins and Embro. Due to his ability to play bagpipes and speak Gaelic, Grant was often asked to officiate at Kirkin' o' the Tartan services.

Grant and Jean, his wife of 55 years, enjoyed several years of retirement in a country home near Burks Falls, Ont., before moving to Woodstock. He is lovingly remembered by Jean and their children: Margaret (Philip Dunn), Donald (Irene MacLeod), Libby (Barry Harmer) and Peter (Eileen Love) and by granddaughters Georgina, Anna, Lucy and Jacqueline.

Pritchard, Robert W., in his 90th year, in Sarnia, Ont., May 11, 2004. A highly respected local physician, Dr. Bob was a long-time, devoted elder at Laurel-Lea St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church, Sarnia, and delegate to the 1988 General Assembly. Not for himself alone, he exemplified his faith by serving the Sarnia-area community for over 40 years as a chest physician, anesthetist and medical leader of the Lung Association. Bob is survived by his wife, Betty, sons Fred and Robert, and daughters Mary and Susan, and their families.

Reid, Rev. William, passed away July 19, 2004, in Pictou, N.S. Born July 24, 1912, in Home-wood, Man. His energy and dedication marked his service in congregations at Sherbrooke, North Shore, Cape Breton, and New Glasgow in Nova Scotia and at Winchester, Renfrew and Kirkwall-Sheffield in Ontario. Known as a pastor of the people, Bill initiated and supported youth groups, men's choirs and family activities, served on several boards of General Assembly and as moderator of the Atlantic Provinces synod. After retirement he served in Cape Breton and Pictou County as stated supply and was appointed minister emeritus of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, New Glasgow. Bill will be remembered as a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.



Rienks, Rev. Gabe.

At Willett Hospital, Paris, Ont., on Sat., June 19, 2004, the Lord opened his arms and carried home his faithful disciple Rev. Gabe Rienks in his 90th year. Loving husband and friend of

Afina Rienks (nee Van Thiel) for the past 58 years; father of Eugene (Grace) Rienks, Edmonton; Sjoukje (Max) Gunther, Netherlands; Pier (Ada) Rienks, Whitehorse; Marti (Aris) Dreyer, Paris. Gabe Rienks is also survived by 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren and several brothers and sisters in the Netherlands. Mr. Rienks served the Christian Reformed churches in Pembroke and Simcoe and went on to serve the Presbyterian Church until his retirement in 1985. After he retired, Gabe wrote many articles for the *Presbyterian Record* and a book about his missionary brother Tabe. For Gabe, God was the beginning, the middle and the end. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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Eastern Charlotte pastoral charge, NB (St. George; Pennfield). Rev. Dr. Paul Brown, 117 Germain St., Saint John, NB E2L 2E9; 506-634-1760; pbrown@biblesociety.ca.

Fredericton, St. Andrew's (youth and families ministry). Rev. Douglas Blaikie, 512 Charlotte St., Fredericton, NB E3B 1M2; 506-455-8220; minister@sapc.ca.

Hunter River, PEI; Glasgow Road; Brookfield. Rev. Dr. Gordon Matheson, PO Box 275, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7K4; stapmath@eastlink.com.

Lunenburg, NS, St. Andrew's; Rose Bay, St. Andrew's. Rev. L. George Macdonald, 6357 London St., Halifax, NS B3L 1X2; 902-454-5253; lgmacdonald@ns.sympatico.ca.

St. Andrew's By-The-Sea, NB, Greenock; St. Stephen, St. Stephen's. Rev. Douglas Blaikie, 35 Crown Ave., New Maryland, NB E3C 1E1; minister@sapc.ca.

Truro, NS, St. James; McClure's Mills, St. Paul's. Rev. Laurence Mawhinney, PO Box 1972, Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0; dlmawhinney@eastlink.ca.

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Ottawa, Knox. Rev. William Ball, 470 Roosevelt Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 1Z6; 613-722-1144; wball@magma.ca.

Ottawa, St. Andrew's (minister of Christian development). Rev. Charlene Wilson, 579 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 4K1; jcwilson@magma.ca.

Pincourt, QC, Ile Perrot. David Morris, Convener, Search Committee, 242 Fifth Ave., Pincourt, QC J7V 5L3; 514-453-4378; dafydd.rich@sympatico.ca.

Smiths Falls, ON, Westminster. Rev. Larry Paul, 17 McLean Blvd., Perth, ON K7H 2Z2; 613-267-7759; paul@superaje.com.

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Angus, Zion. Rev. Ed Hoekstra, Box 821, Coldwater, ON L0K 1E0; 705-686-3648; edhoekstra@encode.com.

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Campbellford, St. Andrew's; Burnbrae, St.

Andrew's. Rev. Dr. Don Freeman, 272 Lilly Lake Rd., RR 2, Peterborough, ON K9J 6X3; 705-749-3290; donafreeman@hotmail.com.

Collingwood, First. Rev. Dr. A.R. Neal Mathers, Box 12, Nottawa, ON L0M 1P0; 705-444-6823; arnmat@bconnex.net.

Guelph, Westminster St. Paul's. Rev. Jeff Veenstra, 73 Queen St. E, Cambridge, ON N3C 2A9; jeff.veenstra@sympatico.ca.

Hillsburgh, St. Andrew's. Rev. Harvey Self, PO Box 276, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z7; 519-941-1334; tweedsmuirpresbyterian@bellnet.ca.

Ivy, Ivy Church; Barrie, Essa Road; (three-quarters time). Rev. Patrick Voo, 8 Margaret St., Angus, ON L0M 1B0; 705-424-6118; zionangus@aol.com; www.ivypreschurch.com.

Lakefield, St. Andrew's; Lakehurst, Knox. Rev. William Baird, 68 Lang Rd., RR 3, Keene, ON K0L 2G0; Tel/Fax 705-295-6874.

Mississauga, Clarkson Road. Rev. Sean J. Foster, 156 Third Line, Oakville, ON L6L 3Z8; 905-827-3851; sean@hopedalechurch.ca.

Palmerston, Knox; Drayton, Knox. Rev. Dr. Brice L. Martin, 190 Tucker St., Box 159, Arthur, ON N0G 1A0; bricelmartin@yahoo.com.

Scarborough, Knox (Agincourt). Rev. Dr. Ian Clark, 5 Ruddell Pl., Toronto, ON M1C 3E4; ian.clark@utoronto.ca.

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jeffveenstra@hotmail.com

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Schomberg, Emmanuel (half-time). Rev. Barry Van Dusen, 5750 King Rd., PO Box 535, Nobleton, ON L0G 1N0; 905-859-0843; barry.peggy.vandusen@sympatico.ca.

Stouffville, St. James. Rev. Laura Duggan, 484 Water St., Newmarket, ON L3Y 1M5; 905-895-5512; duggan@on.aibn.com.

Toronto, Riverdale. Rev. Cameron Brett, 75 Simcoe St., Toronto, ON M5J 1W9; cbrett@standrewstoronto.org.

Toronto, Runnymede. Rev. Marion Schaffer, 680 Annette St., Toronto, ON M6S 2C3; marion_schaffer@yahoo.com.

Toronto, St. Andrew's, Humber Heights. Rev. Garth Wilson, 155 Wychwood Ave., Toronto, ON M6C 2T1.

Toronto, University Church. Rev. Bryn MacPhail, 15 Lambeth Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9A 2Y6; bryn@reformedtheology.ca.

Toronto, Westview. Rev. Hugh T. Donnelly, 65 Glen Manor Dr., Toronto, ON M4E 3V3; hugh@beacheschurch.org and/or Rev. Dr. Jan McIntyre, 152 Floyd Ave., Toronto, ON M4K 2B7; janiceronald@rogers.com.

Wasaga Beach, Wasaga Beach Community. Rev. Craig Cook, 9 Lindsay Cres., Orillia, ON L3V 7G2; lightsem@sprint.ca.

Synod of Southwestern Ontario

Atwood, Atwood Church. Rev. Lillian Wilton, 68 Main St., Exeter, ON N0M 1S1; 519-235-2784; caven@tcc.on.ca.

Bluevale, Knox; Belmore, Knox. Rev. Pearl Vasarhelyi, General Delivery, Holstein, ON N0G 2A0; 519-334-3952; vasar@wightman.ca.

Brantford, Knox; Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Pleasant Church. Rev. Donald N. Young, 11 White Oaks Ave., Brantford, ON N3R 5N8; greenbrier@bfree.on.ca.

Chatham, St. James. Rev. David Heath, 251 Duncan St., Wallaceburg, ON N8A 5G5; dsheath@cogeco.ca.

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Who has the right to speak about homosexuality?

Homosexuality is about real, breathing, loving, often hurting people

The issue of homosexuality is, perhaps, the most difficult issue about which a Christian is obliged to write. It is about real, breathing, loving, often hurting people. More than this, to oppose the various demands of gay people is seen by many to be cruel and uncaring. They have a point. Hatred and ignorance have been behind much of the opposition to homosexuality over the years and, to a certain extent, still are.

We're probably all guilty. I know there are some things I have written in the past that I would not say now. But to refine one's attitude toward a situation does not necessarily mean changing one's overall stance. For me, the supreme position must be no compromise on truth, no compromise on love.

A few observations. First, it is odd that people who routinely hurl abuse at anti-poverty groups, unions and social activists and who call for ever more attacks on welfare and public funding are so very liberal on issues like homosexuality. I have seen this time and time again. Journalists and commentators who make a living out of labelling people as extremists or as unrepresentative leaders of special interest groups, who champion banks and corporations, suddenly become all sensitive and sympathetic when sexuality is the issue.

It's the phenomenon of the lifestyle liberal. The campaign for supposed gay rights is, to a large extent, a middle-class battle, one supported by money and the market because money and the market believe in low taxes and, I'm sorry, low morals. Morality simply gets in the way of the dollar. The neo-conservative rides again.

Protest the closing of a hospital or the

shooting of a black youth by the cops, and we'll call you a zealot. Ask for two men to be married, and we'll say how brave you are and how difficult it must be for gay couples.

Second, the bias shown by media in reporting on gay issues is quite extraordinary. Interesting this, in that marriage is usually mocked and marginalized. People get married all the time, sacrifice for one another, remain faithful to one another, love one another, raise children

the union of a man and a woman.

The current political and social fashion is with gay people but that fashion has no answers. A genuine resolution, please, with compassion and empathy all round. Shouting will solve nothing. We all need to be reminded of that. What we must also remember, however, is the simultaneous approach of Christ's love and the Christian's response to sin. Love, understanding and the acceptance of repentance and transformation.

For me, the supreme position must be no compromise on truth, no compromise on love

together, nurse one another. Yet newspapers, television and movies seem to promote infidelity and laugh at the stable married couple. Perhaps it's just because they're boring old heterosexuals.

Third, there are crazy people on both sides. Some of those protesting all this have shamed the cause and the man they claim they represent. They evince venom and coldness and seem to be obsessed with this particular issue. Equally, there are some in the gay community who are horribly intolerant. I can show you the death threats and know all too well of the attempts to have me fired.

But these two groups represent the polarized borders. In between there is much room for dialogue and understanding. And dialogue and understanding there must be. Gay people live together, always will live together and, while we might disagree with their lifestyle, they are entitled to name partners as legal and financial beneficiaries. Equally, marriage was conceived to describe only one thing:

Every time I am tempted to react too strongly, I remember that I, at least, am sexually broken and there is a very good chance you are as well. I thank God my temptations, my flaws, are not of a homosexual nature; I can only imagine how difficult life would be if they were. There are many sins in the world and many sinners. Perhaps if the church had been more egalitarian in its critiques in the past, we would be more accepted now when we speak out on issues such as homosexuality.

The debate will continue. Who knows where it will end. If there is any hatred in your heart, you have no right to speak out on the subject. If there is love in your heart, you have a responsibility to speak out on the subject. As followers of him who is love. **R**

Michael Coren is a broadcaster, author and speaker. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com. You can join Michael in January 2005 on a tour of biblical Israel. Call 416-923-2003 or 1-800-262-6818, Ext. 9204.



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Joan is an elder at Unionville Presbyterian Church and has served on the planning team for Stewards by Design since its inception. She also serves on her congregation's stewardship committee and is keenly interested in issues of ecological stewardship.



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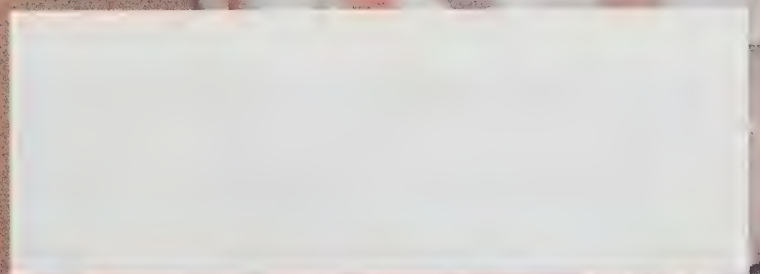
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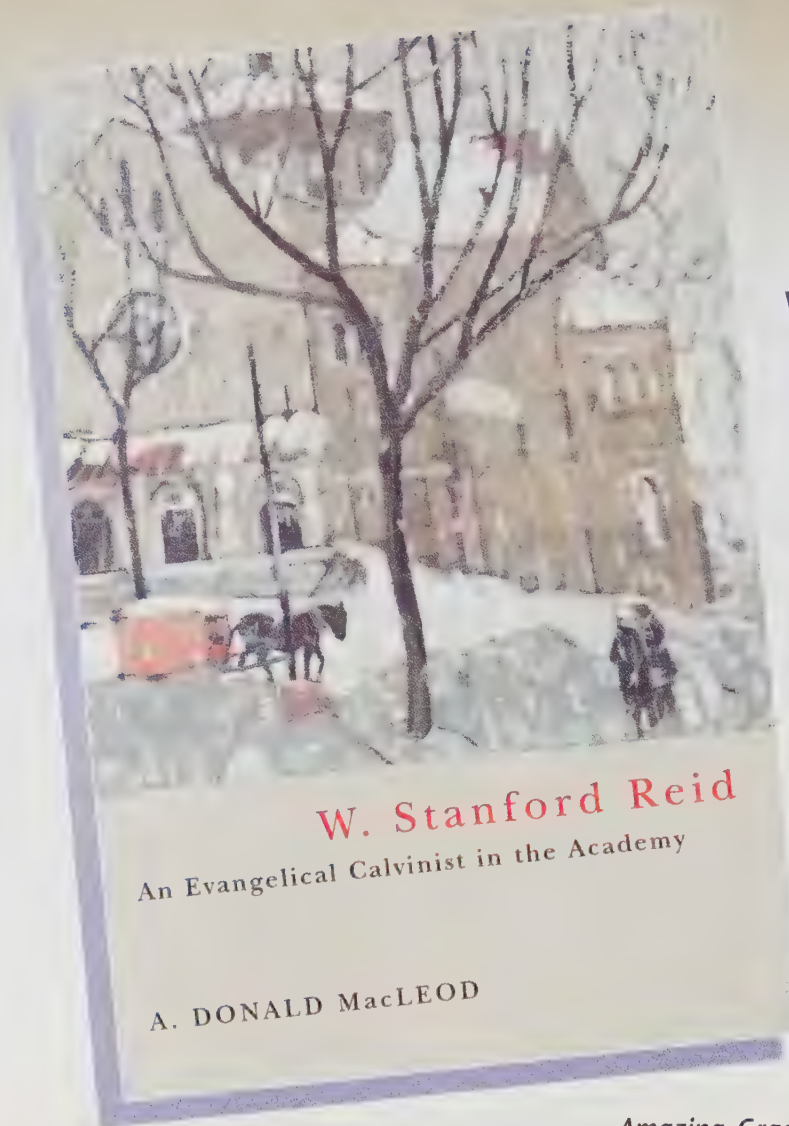
CBC's Brian Stewart on Christians and Journalists • World champ Highland dancer

PRESBYTERIAN Record

October 2004

Facing Certain Change
An Aging Church Explores New Directions





W. Stanford Reid
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our cover

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Photo by Andrew G. Crozier.

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Churches must change or be changed

Journalists aren't the only messengers who occasionally get shot (figuratively speaking) trying to do their job. About a decade ago, University of Lethbridge sociologist Reg Bibby acquired the moniker Bad News Bibby for his analysis of religious trends in Canada that confirmed what churches had been noticing for some time: ever fewer Canadians were attending church.

Bibby then came out with *Restless Gods*, a book whose thesis was that although there were many Canadians who weren't attending church, nevertheless, a significant number of them associated with the denomination of their baptism and should not be overlooked or stricken from the congregational mailing list.

The latest book from Professor Bibby is *Restless Churches: How Canada's Churches Can Contribute to the Emerging Religious Renaissance*. "I am convinced," writes Bibby, "that the resources and the will exist for ministry to take place that touches people who are not actively involved in the nation's churches. ... What is required, however, is a clear-cut strategy that is informed by sound research and sound congregational input."

Which brings us to the current issue of the *Record*. Our cover story centres on the struggle in the Presbytery of Montreal to deal with declining church attendance amid considerable real estate assets (and the upkeep of the emptying bricks and mortar). It is even more interesting that this debate is taking place in Quebec, a province that has set aside millions of dollars over the past several years for the restoration of historic buildings, including churches.

The complication is that while preserving history is noble and laudable, churches are meant to be far more than architectural museum pieces. They are built to the glory of God — meaning they are to be lively places of worship and ministry in the community. The ruined abbeys of England and France may touch us emotionally, but they are ultimately of less significance than the storefront mission church in the suburban mall in Anywhere Canada.

There are other stories in this issue that focus on what churches facing challenges are doing to hold and attract younger members, such as modifying church government to permit shorter terms of service is proving to encourage more people to become elders who might otherwise have shied away from a lifetime commitment to help govern a congregation. They are also hiring experienced consultants who help congregations consider different forms and approaches to ministry that they might not have thought of on their own.

Many churches have been leery about these approaches, apparently unaware that other icons of a society that once was — Eaton's, Simpson's — have fallen by the wayside because they weren't nimble enough to keep up with contemporary tastes. Yet many of the traditions in churches are peculiar not

only to this country but to a fairly narrow period of time that disappeared in the 1950s. Does anyone really want to go back to 19th-century mores? It's unlikely. One of the reasons for change in culture — religious or secular — is that some concepts and practices are found not to work any longer.

Some changes are subtle. A survey in the United States of young people and clergy asked each group to rank what they thought were the most important opportunities for ministry in life. The clergy cited baptisms, weddings and funerals. The young people listed death of a pet, a friend moving away, starting school. What was evident is that the clergy were focusing on rites of passage while the young people were concerned about relationships, especially broken ones.

And these are the very interests Dr. Bibby has noticed. While only 20 per cent of Canadians attend religious services nearly every week (down from 30 per cent a generation ago,) 80 per cent believe in God and more than 70 per cent believe God cares about them personally and pray to God at some time. Three-quarters of adults and half of teenagers surveyed say they have spiritual needs and are asking the big questions about life: where did we come from, why is there suffering (and its flip side, what is the source of happiness), where do we go when we die?

Even the 20 per cent attendance figure needs to be put in perspective. "There is no other group activity in Canada that begins to compare with such a level of involvement" as Christian worship, says Bibby. Total church attendance on an average Sunday — not Easter or Christmas — surpasses a typical Grey Cup or Super Bowl television audience in Canada.

Change is difficult and needs to be done carefully and thoughtfully, but change is inevitable and necessary and, very often, good. The amount of money Canadian Christians spend on maintaining bricks and mortar to house often little more than a handful of Sunday worshippers as opposed to flesh-and-blood ministry is an issue every church needs to examine.

If this needs reinforcing, the finding that teenagers value friendships as most important in life ("a comfortable life" came in fifth) and enjoy friends far more than even dating should provide some food for thought.

None of this is to suggest that Christians ought to be satisfied with the 20 per cent of Canadians who regularly worship. As Jim Czeglédi, the national church's associate secretary of worship and evangelism and who is quoted by Bibby, wrote a couple of years ago: "Congregations must understand that the unchurched are the church's largest mission field." Unfortunately, says Czeglédi, "most churches do a poor job of reaching [them]."

David Harris

Unmasking translators

I wish to ask whether Andrew Faiz's fine note on the King James Bible of 1611 ("The Making of the King James Bible", July/August 2004) is to be considered by readers to be a sufficient review of Adam Nicolson's *God's Secretaries*, and even more seriously to ask whether this is a recommendation that this book be placed in all Presbyterian church libraries?

What an eye-opener on the translators. Without someone like Nicolson we would not have had that story so aptly summarized by Andrew. Nor would we have had a treasure trove of amazingly literate English, nor a new glimpse into the Jacobean as well as Tudor and early Stuart period of English history.

As I am old enough to remember the furor in the fundamentalist-evangelical world about the translation of the Revised Standard Version (1952), I cannot help but think of the irony. These "worldly, corrupt and pious translators" of 1603-1611 gave us an "enduring miracle" to which many fundamentalists still cling as the inspired Word of God, while the much better work done by the translators named in 1952 (many of them conservative evangelicals) were labelled as 'pinkies' and tainted with a Communist brush because of the evil of McCarthy-

ism then rampant with many pious supporters in the NAE. And yet the RSV, fortunately, another "enduring miracle," is the translation widely used today.

*Peter Penner, Calgary
Emeritus Professor of History,
Mount Allison University*

We can't keep closing our eyes

I am grateful to [Joyce] Gladwell (Letters, July/August 2004) for so poignantly and succinctly (by Presbyterian standards) summarizing the disappointment and disbelief I feel when reading the dialogue and debate surrounding the topic of gay support.

I had hoped to find within my church the strength and encouragement to fight the fights worth fighting, to make our world a better place. Instead, the Presbyterian Church is yet another obstacle to be overcome. When the next in an endless series of discussions is held, as the participants and leaders look around at the dwindling attendees and members, they will start to see the fallout of their solution of non-confrontation. As a parent of teenagers, I can't pretend to understand or defend our church's "if-I-close-my-eyes-it-will-go-away" approach to respecting and welcoming gays in our community. If we keep clos-

ing our eyes, the only thing going away will be parishioners.

*Susan McVeigh,
Etobicoke, Ont.*

Presbyterian pride

On Aug. 8, I sat in the Kintyre Presbyterian Church on the occasion of their 143rd anniversary and felt the right kind of pride as I listened to one of the most inspiring sermons of my life. David Mayberry, a non pastor, delivered a very Christian message as the Ontario coordinator of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. David and [his wife] Cathy have set aside their dairy operation in Oxford County for an undetermined time to travel around Ontario encouraging church communities to involve themselves in mission projects contributing to the CFGB.

Our charge of Kintyre, Rodney, New Glasgow, was thanked for our efforts in our ten years of community growing projects and the dedication of our non-denominational group, Mission for Kids, which is a substantial donor. We were reminded of how our modest efforts coupled with those of our Presbyterian congregations across Canada working with the other 12 denominations that make up the CFGB are responsible for

The Evangelical Dude



prolonging the lives of hundreds of thousands of desperate people in drought or flood or war ravaged areas of the world. All too often those people have no one else to turn to, even their own governments. I note recent news reports, especially of impending genocide in Sudan and Chad where CFGB national director, Jim Cornelius, is trying to coordinate our best efforts for the refugees.

David has had opportunity to tour the country of Malawi and witnessed firsthand the appreciation of these people for Christ's churches in Canada. When all other help fails them, they turn to the church and David reminded us that "we are the church."

I was proud to be a Canadian and proud to be a member of a Christian church that has seen fit to encourage its members to share our Canadian bounty with people in the world who have virtually nothing.

More is needed and even though many of us are donors, we live in a country where very few of us want for the necessities of life. I looked around me at my fellow worshippers, hoping they had received the same message that I had. There was no special plea with accompanying envelopes but everyone there knows someone they can contact to respond to the ongoing need. I realized that my witness is not to worry about whether they give but just dig a little deeper into my own pocket.

Robert King,
Rodney, Ont.

Cheering reading

Few things have come to hand giving such delight as the arrival of the *Record* today! From Richard Fee's photo on the cover (July/August 2004) through the many reports of a lively mother church and her people, it is wonderfully cheering reading. All those faces representing more and more of the different peoples of the earth who have found their home in Canada and made their contributions in our Presbyterian Church. Ah yes!

Consigned to crutches for six weeks and tired of reading and the Internet as my chief windows unto an often deeply troubling world, I rejoice to know that

A farmer's smile

Photo: Carl Hiebert, PWS&D



Bright smiles on farmers' faces is one of results Ekwendeni Hospital's agriculture and nutrition program, supported by PWS&D, is having in rural Malawi.

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In addition to training farmers in soil management and crop production, the also program encourages healthy childcare and feeding practices.

The farmers are eager to learn the new techniques and receive seed for the new crops. Already the program has seen reduced malnutrition rates and healthier children in the communities, giving the farmers reason to smile.

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our younger people are really living it up in creative ways.

Again, thank you for sending me the *Record*, and all the best for a future pre-saged in the July/August issue.

*John Nyren Buchanan,
Cambridge, Mass.,
Berlin, Germany*

Why antagonize adherents?

Member or adherent, I'm offended by the heedless remark reported in the *Record* regarding privileges ("Membership still has its privileges", July/August 2004). Are the pews so full that the Rev. Gentlemen find it necessary to antagonize certain of the congregation? Namely adherents?

And who is an adherent? Perhaps I'm one, as I have not formally *joined* the church where I worship.

But I am a Presbyterian, and proclaim myself thus. When as a teenager, and following a course of studies in what it is to be a Presbyterian, I was admitted to the church, I was not told that membership came with an expiry date.

Does it? Are old truths, no longer truths? What has replaced them, if so? Should the scenes of baptism, admission to the church, recitation of the creed, be revisited?

Of course our faith, practice, actions or gifts, are not in question. Just don't vote! Really!

*Althea Whitmore,
Burlington, Ontario*

Homosexuality and the church

I was shocked and dismayed by the shock and dismay that appeared in the letters section (Letters, September 2004). As part of the debate that arose at the East Toronto Presbytery around pastoral care for two specific individuals, I feel the need to respond.

The debate was, and is, a difficult one because it revolves around two stories, both of which derive from the Bible (although I could well argue that they also, at least in part, derive from cultural mores and traditions that come from man and not God).

The first of these stories concerns a covenant between God and his chosen

people that was codified as Law and revered from the earliest time of recorded history until today. For Christians, that Law was largely lifted by a new Revelation and new prophets at a specific point of time. That is, all of the Law with the exception of those parts dealing with "sexual immorality," however that may be defined.

The second of these stories concerns grace, a grace that is found throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The grace that is needed by people who hide from their creator because they make mistakes, or worse, deliberately defy their creator by hurting their neighbours or even by hurting themselves. A story that makes the radical claim that, despite the fact that none deserve this grace, it is available freely to all. A story that makes the equally radical claim that that none of us are worthy to pass judgment on the essence or core being of our neighbours. "Let he among you who is without sin cast the first stone."

As a Church, we are called to demonstrate the grace in the second story through prayer, worship and our sacraments. Because of their adherence to the first story, however, there are some who would deny this demonstration of grace to many of their neighbours. But why must this first story take precedence over the second story?

Despite the fact that dozens of people write letters to the editor of the *Presbyterian Record*, no one has ever adequately explained to me why we must cast out those people who are, at their core, different from the majority. In fact, the numerous logical flaws in the strict interpretation of the first story means that, for me, and I suspect for many others, the first story must forever be subservient to the second story. Not rejected outright, mind you, but rather read in light of the greater narrative.

It was, and remains, a difficult debate because I love those who cling to the first story. I believe they cling to this story because they see the culture that it represents as swamped by a new culture, one that only tangentially recognizes many of the good things that reside in that older,

original culture. To this, I am not unsympathetic.

But at the end of the debate, I must serve a higher purpose than either of the old or the new culture, both of which can be traced to man. I find God's purpose for me in the second story and, as an elder and Presbyterian, I must answer to that calling.

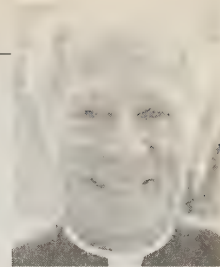
*Gord Brown
Toronto, Ontario*

I am ever astonished by the numbers of letters from supposedly caring, compassionate Presbyterians that either rail against the church for wasting time discussing the issue of sexual orientation or are concerned that we are bowing to the whims of the secular world. Has it ever occurred to people that we continue to discuss the issue precisely because it IS a matter of social justice? Is the average PCC member even aware that many biblical scholars question the dubious, traditional interpretations of the scant five biblical passages that seem to refer to the issue? Do people in the pews realize that Christian sexual ethics tend to focus more on the loving justice between partners in a relationship rather than on what body parts match up where?

The issue of homosexuality is the hot-button issue of our modern day church that reveals brokenness; not the brokenness of the homosexual, but that of a church that can't seem to seek understanding, to challenge biased presumption, and to do justice to all God's children. It is precisely because of this brokenness that the secular world may, indeed, hold the key to teach us what we fail to grasp. It would definitely not be the first time that God reached outside his 'chosen' few to bring emissaries with a message of truth.

*Derrick Cunningham,
Cobourg, Ontario*

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.



Knowing the heart of an alien

'You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt' (Exodus 23:9)

Few subjects provoke stronger opinions among Canadians than the topic of refugees. In some circles, refugees have become synonymous with terrorists; yet refugees are often the victims of terror and need protection. The decision of some churches to offer sanctuary to refused refugee claimants threatened with deportation from Canada highlights the human casualties of an admittedly flawed refugee system.

Even while stating that she wants to overhaul the government's immigration and refugee operations, Minister of Immigration Judy Sgro said churches should cease offering sanctuary. But churches felt constrained to go this route because the government has not implemented an appeal process that was part of the immigration bill passed into law in 2002. The minister's claim that this directive was for the protection of our country and of Canadians drew an outpouring of editorials and public response. Most were sympathetic to the churches' position.

The sometimes ambivalent attitude within Canada toward refugees is a reflection of international trends, particularly in the industrialized world. Countries like the United States, Australia and Britain have signed the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, yet each has instituted practices that threaten the protection they have pledged to provide.

As Haiti descended into chaos in February 2004, President Bush unapologetically stated that any Haitian fleeing to safety in the United States would be sent back immediately. Britain negotiated with Tanzania to establish a refugee camp to which Somali asylum seekers in the United Kingdom could be deported. When Australia redefined its migration bound-



A refugee camp in Afghanistan.

aries prohibiting refugees who made it into their ports from accessing its asylum system, many refugees (mostly children) ended up on the tiny island republic of Nauru. Canada deploys significant human and financial resources to prevent asylum seekers from reaching our borders. Judith Kumin, a visiting law professor (on leave from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees) at Carleton University, Ottawa, asks this question: "Do these examples signify a parting of ways between ethics and national interests?" The answer apparently is yes.

What must be stated unequivocally is that the world today is a bleak place for refugees. As I write, the news carries stories daily about the unfolding genocide in Darfur, Sudan, which the international community seems impotent to stop. Heavily armed militias terrorize the population, raping and murdering people, destroying their livestock and burning villages. For the few people who are able

to leave the region, the journey does not bring safety. Refugees who have crossed the border into Chad may still succumb to illness, starvation or further assaults by militias. Humanitarian aid cannot even reach huge numbers of those affected. As always, the elderly, children and women are most at risk. Ten years after the genocide in Rwanda, history seems poised to repeat the tragedy.

Sudan is only one of many disasters where victims are forced to flee and seek safety. But the problem does not lie only with corrupt governments or armed non-state militia forces that commit or ignore human rights violations. Fear, misunderstanding and prejudice also contribute to the crises refugees face today.

No one is suggesting the millions of refugees in the world today should be granted automatic asylum in countries such as Canada. The first option is to try to stabilize situations so people can return home. The second is to settle people

Photo by Németh Eszter, HIA/ACT

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Feb 18/05 - 11 Days
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as close to their home country as possible. Resettlement to a third country is only a third option — often a traumatic experience.

In the Bible, the foreigner, stranger or the alien are the counterparts of today's refugees. The Scriptures call the faithful again and again to welcome the stranger, the alien, the sojourner or the "one from abroad." Having been victims themselves, the Israelites were urged not to subject others to the same abuse. "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21). This command is stated repeatedly, perhaps because it was often neglected. Canada, a nation of descendants of immigrants and refugees, is like Israel: we need the same reminder today!

Fear often gets in the way of welcome. Jesus ministered among those who were rejected by the religious authorities of his time, who were fearful of the faith being corrupted and violated. Reaching beyond his Jewish community, Jesus taught, healed and listened to those who were despised and rejected — like Samaritans, lepers and women. He saw human beings first and ministered to their needs.

Followers of Jesus who are now offering sanctuary to refugees are working with people who are afraid. Churches that offer sanctuary are a gift, not a threat. They are living the faith that sees the image of God in each human being.

The Presbyterian Church is involved in refugee work at many levels. We support programs in several countries that care for those displaced from their home countries and are living in refugee camps. We are a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, approved by the Government of Canada to sponsor duly processed refugees to come to Canada through private sponsorship. Canada is the only country in the world to allow individuals and organizations to sponsor refugees privately. Over the years, many churches have sponsored individuals and families, helping to protect them and giving them the opportunity to contribute their gifts to Canada. For some congregations, this has been a one-time experience; for others, such as First Church in Thunder Bay, Ont., First in Winnipeg and Waterloo North in Ontario, it is an ongoing commitment.

Action Réfugiés Montréal, directed by Rev. Glynis Williams, a Presbyterian minister, is a joint ministry of the Presbyterian and Anglican churches in Montreal that has worked with refugees for more than 15 years. Combining direct assistance to individuals with education in the churches and advocacy on policy issues, this ministry is involved in several aspects of refugee need. As well as offering sponsorship from overseas, ARM coordinates a visitation program by which church representatives meet refugees in government immigration detention centres. Detainees often do not understand why they are held in prison-like settings, and they are frightened. Another program matches refugee women seeking asylum (sometimes with children) with volunteers from the Montreal community. Both refugees and volunteers benefit from this relationship.

When Jesus was an infant, his family fled to another country for protection; so he knows firsthand the predicament and heart of the refugee. Jesus' followers must make an effort to know the heart and needs of refugees in Canada and around the world, responding in practical and caring ways because of the love of God who, as Paul stated, "shows no partiality."

Moderator's itinerary

October 17

Kings, New Minas, N.S.

October 18-20

Synod of the Atlantic Provinces
at St. Mark's, Charlottetown

October 23

St. Andrew's, Sackville, N.B.

October 24

Bethel, Riverview, N.B.

October 27

40th anniversary
Fernie House, Scarborough, Ont.
at Trinity York Mills, Toronto

October 31

175th anniversary
Westminster, Smiths Falls, Ont.

November 1-3

Life and Mission Agency Committee
Crieff Hills, Ont.

FROM BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
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Church website proves a big hit

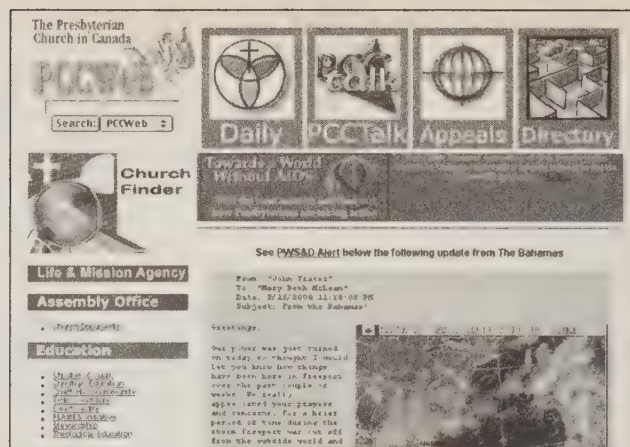
If, as membership figures seem to indicate, people aren't exactly tuning in to the Presbyterian Church these days, they are at least tuning in to its news electronically. Visits to the church's website, www.presbyterian.ca, reached 53,383 for the month of April — an average of 1,779 hits per day and an increase of more than 6,000 over February. Those figures project to approximately 650,000 visits over the course of the year. In 1999, there were 500.

Interestingly, although the website is intended primarily as a resource for Canadian Presbyterians, there were twice as

many visitors from the United States (29,381) as from Canada (14,433). There were also hundreds of visits from Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America.

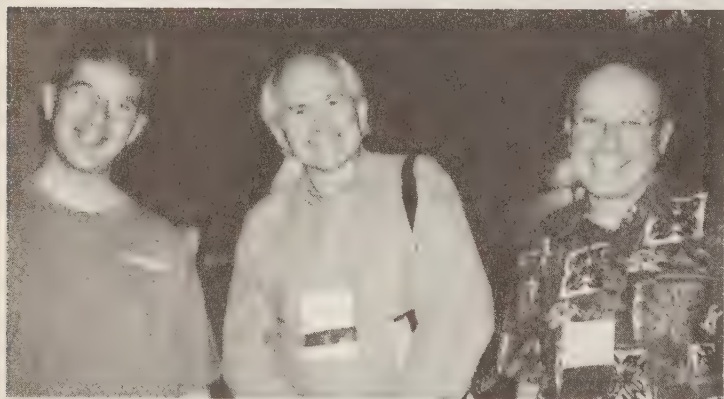
A Presbyterian love of discussion was evident when it came to the individual departments on the website. Next to the home page (12,806 visits in April), the most popular page was PCCTalk (6,472). The talk itself was, for the most part, brief and to the point, lasting an average of 1.5 minutes per

visit. The next most popular pages for the month were, perhaps, predictable: church finder received 2,060 visits (it must work — visits lasted an average of 17 seconds) and Ministry and Church Vocations opportunities had 1,266 visits lasting an average of three minutes.



Atlantic School of Theology appoints Nancy Cocks

Presbyterian minister Rev. Nancy Cocks is the newest faculty member for Pastoral Theology at the Atlantic School of Theology. Cocks is currently the deputy warden of the MacLeod Centre, a gathering place located on the small island of Iona, Scotland, which was designed to help people with disabilities celebrate Community together. Cocks, author of the children's book *Growing Up With God*, holds a Doctorate in Theology from the Toronto School of Theology and a Master of Divinity from Knox College at the University of Toronto. She was formerly on the faculty of the Vancouver School of Theology. She will start her new post at AST in January 2005.



At the July conference of the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada, Andrew Donaldson (far right) became president for a two-year term. Donaldson was co-editor of the *Book of Praise* (1997) and Pastoral Musician and Worship Enlivener at Trafalgar Presbyterian Church in Oakville. Pictured with him are Father Anthony Ruff (left) and Hymn Society executive director Carl P. Daw Jr.

Banding together to build a community

Four churches in Kitchener, Ont., are launching a feasibility study to examine how, as a team, they might better serve their congregations. The Four Churches Project proposes that St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Zion United, Trinity United and St. Peter's Lutheran churches would develop land between their properties (they are all located within a block of one another) for low cost housing and outreach programs. "It's been a long and arduous journey, even to this point," says Rev. William Johnson, associate minister at St. Andrew's. "But one important component is the idea of integration of this serving community that will mean an enhancement of life." The study is expected to take up to six months to complete.

Filling in the gaps

Where the government offers no hope to refugees, the church offers sanctuary

by Amy Cameron

Among faith-based organizations in Canada, offering sanctuary for refugees is considered a last resort. The practice of sheltering refugees in church basements while their appeal inches through the system is not taken lightly. So when, after a cozy 20-some-year partnership with the Canadian government, Immigration minister Judy Sgro accused churches of offering a "back door" to Canada, those very same churches were floored. "Faith-based organizations are recognized as good allies," says Richard Fee, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. "Are we not partners with the Canadian government? Why should she alienate us?"

Why indeed. Fee hopes to answer this question when representatives from the Presbyterian, United, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches meet with the minister in Ottawa on Sept. 29. Leaders from all four churches have signed a letter to Sgro, demanding that the "flawed refugee determination system" be fixed.

Two years ago, under then-immigration minister Denis Codere, the government promised to introduce a sorely overdue appeal process in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The law came into effect in June 2002 but the section granting refugees right of appeal was not implemented. When questioned, one reason was suggested: there are simply too many claimants. In the opinion of the church, this isn't good enough.

Sanctuary, without a doubt, is a tricky business. Because churches are considered holy places, it is generally believed that police will not remove people housed within. There is, however, no statute protecting this from happening. And refugees, living day-to-day with the fear of being removed from safety and sent back home, can wait up to two years

before any significant movement occurs on their claim. Last winter, police stormed a Quebec City United Church to remove Mohamed Cherfi, a 35-year-old Algerian refugee claimant. It is believed that this was the first time a person was forcibly removed from sanctuary in Canada. Earlier this summer, United Church officials met with representatives from the ministry to talk about the Cherfi incident. The meeting was friendly but then Sgro spoke up. "It's a very difficult issue," she said. "If we start using the churches as the back door to Canada, we're going to have huge problems." The refugees, she implied, pose a security risk to the country.

"Churches are called upon to be the last bastion of hope," says Fee. "And they don't just grab people off the street." Only after very careful screening are churches willing to feed, school and bear the cost of sheltering refugee claimants. In many cases, churches are shielding these displaced people from certain ruin, imprisonment, torture and even death should they be forced to return to their countries. In the July 30 letter to Sgro, Fee states, "Churches feel morally compelled to fill in the gaps by protecting refugees through sanctuary because the

government is not living up to its obligations towards refugees.... Your comment seems to malign the contribution that Canadians make through their churches, to answer the call for help from some of the world's most vulnerable people."

The Presbyterian Church, though never having offered sanctuary directly, is involved in the refugee situation in a number of ways. In partnership with the Anglican Church, the PCC jointly funds L'Action Réfugiés Montreal, an organization directed by refugee coordinator Rev. Glynis Williams. Through Presbyterian World Service and Development, the church is involved in a joint sponsorship program with the federal government, bringing in refugees screened by the United Nations. The agency also supports refugee camps around the world.

Until Sgro's comments, the issue of sanctuary was not a top priority with churches facing the pressures of declining membership and rising costs. However, the minister has prompted faith-based organizations to step, once more, into the fray. "I'm not naïve enough to think that every refugee landing in Canada is as pure as the driven snow," says Fee. "But they deserve a second hearing, a chance, some hope." **R**

There are believed to be up to ten people currently seeking sanctuary in Canadian churches. Here are a few examples:

- Amir Kazemian, a 39-year-old Iranian refugee, has been living in the chapel of St. Michael's Anglican Church, Vancouver, since July 15. Kazemian says he was imprisoned and tortured in Iran because of his father's political views. He came to Canada in 1997 on a visitor's visa.
- Sanja Pecelj hid in the basement of St. Mark's Anglican Church, Halifax, for 441 days. In August, the 34-year-old Serbian woman struck a deal with the federal government, allowing her to leave Canada to then apply for a provincial sponsorship program. She would return as a landed immigrant.
- Samsu Mia, a 39-year-old chef and gardener, came to Canada nine years ago to work in the home of the Deputy High Commissioner of Bangladesh. After three years, he left the embassy and, on July 3, 2003, sought sanctuary with the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa. Mia sells food he makes from the church to raise money for his sanctuary fund. (On June 22, retired Unitarian minister Fred Cappuccino also moved in to the church in voluntary sanctuary.)

Retired clergy group builds its own community

Ministering to ministers is the focus of a group that meets regularly in Hamilton, Ont. Composed mainly of retired clergy, their spouses and diaconal ministers, its aim is affirmation and friendship.

The group began when four clergy couples contacted retirees in the Hamilton area and invited them for lunch once a month at a local restaurant (easily accessible and not too expensive). The results have included: a growing friendship among those who often scarcely knew one another — especially for clergy wives who may never have met before, a bigger effort to keep track of each other, being more related to church news, a Christmas get-together at which 40-50 people may attend. There is laughter, reminiscing and discussion at the lunches. People feel connected again, at home with others from the church family they

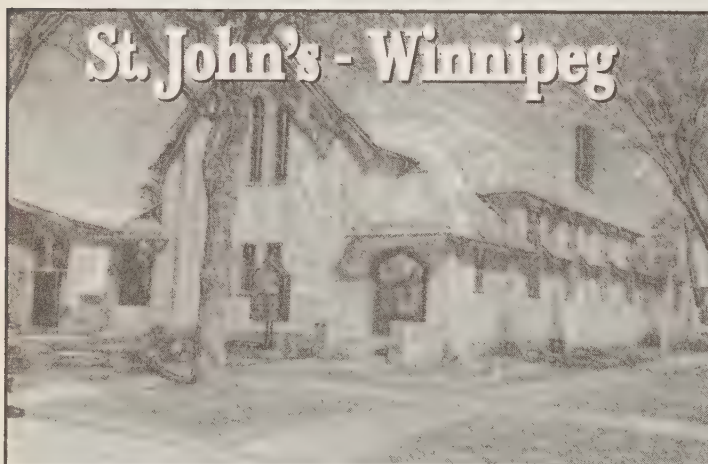


faithfully served for many years.

Retirement sometimes means clergy drop off the radar. A generation (sometimes a presbytery?) arises that "knows not Joseph." Leaving the area where they have served, while usually a wise move, means losing friends and a familiar

neighbourhood. All of this can be painful. The Hamilton group has found a solution and would recommend it to others. Information about the Hamilton-area lunches may be obtained from 905-549-3820 or 905-639-3423 or 416-621-6474.

Rev. Rosemary and Rev. Gerry Doran



The congregation of St. John's Presbyterian Church is in the process of selecting a new full-time minister. Our long-time minister has retired and we will be following procedures for selecting a minister best suited to the future needs of our church family. Our centrally located church presently offers various programs for all aspects of life in the church community.

For further information please contact the
Interim Moderator - Rev. Brenda Fraser at:

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God had 'sense of humour' picking Naude to fight apartheid

by Peter Fabricius

JOHANNESBURG —The late Rev. Beyers Naude was God's joke on the old South African regime, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu said at the funeral of the anti-apartheid cleric at the weekend.

Naude, once an establishment white Afrikaner cleric who became an anti-apartheid activist, was laid to rest in Johannesburg on Saturday. He was carried in the cheap pinewood coffin he had insisted on, but with the full regalia of a state funeral in which President Thabo Mbeki and most of his cabinet took part.

The coffin was carried by senior military officers and politicians and escorted by the presidential guard. Pupils of Beyers Naude High School in Soweto, where black students had fought against the apartheid system, met the procession. "Dr Beyers, we salute you," they sang.

Naude who died on Sept. 7, aged 89, was buried after a service at the Aasvoelkop Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), the once segregated white congregation where in 1963 he denounced the role of his church in the government's racist policies.



Tutu told the large crowd, made up of the hues of the new South Africa, that Naude had been selected by the apartheid rulers for promotion to the very top of the ruling church establishment, even being admitted into the secretive Broederbond, the inner circle of Afrikaner power.

"What really gets me is the divine sense of humour," said Tutu, who himself won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his peaceful resistance to apartheid and who turned the solemn occasion into one of celebration with his own humour.

"But no-one counted on God's sense of humour. Who, who, in his right mind would have chosen someone like Beyers, the embodiment of Afrikanerdom, as his weapon in the fight against the evil of apartheid [which sought to separate people by their colour]?"

"I would not have. You would not have. But God did," said Tutu, likening this choice to God's selection of Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of Christians, to become the disciple Paul and to have chosen David, "a well-known adulterer" as the ancestor of Jesus.

God had shown in doing so that he sides with the poor and oppressed. "He [Naude] gave the credibility of Christianity back to black people," Tutu said.

Mbeki eulogised Naude as the saviour of racial reconciliation. "Sacrifices he made guaranteed us our peace and reconciliation because they told those who might have sought vengeance that the Afrikaner people are not their enemies because Beyers Naude was not their enemy but their comrade, friend and leader," said Mbeki.

ENI

Eye on Zion

The Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem hosted more than 500 representatives from 31 countries earlier this year to address the dangers of Christian Zionism. "Christian Zionism is a modern theological and political movement that embraces the most extreme ideological positions of Zionism," said conference leaders, "thereby becoming detrimental to a just peace within Palestine and Israel."

Sabeel identified Christian Zionism as a demon within the ranks of Western Christianity that silently but actively legitimizes Israel's violent policies toward Palestinians. Conference participants said that Christian Zionism promotes a world-

view that identifies the gospel "with the ideology of empire, colonialism, and militarism. In its extreme form, it places an emphasis on apocalyptic events leading to the end of history rather than living Christ's love and justice today."

Sojourners Magazine

For Pete's Sake

How can a Christian tick off both porn filmmakers and religious conservatives? Ask youth pastors Mike Foster and Craig Gross, who created XXXchurch.com, "the #1 Christian Porn Site" on the Internet, calling children and adults to "get in the gutter" and educate themselves about the physical and spiritual dangers of pornography.

Foster and Gross grabbed the attention of ABC, CNN, FOX News, and *The Daily Show* with their provocative television spot "Pete the Porno Puppet." The public service announcement — produced free by California porn director James DiGiorgio (a Roman Catholic who believes "adult" videos should be for adults) — warns children to be wary of pornography in locked drawers, parents' closets, and the Internet. The ad also tells parents to say "no" to pornography.

"XXXChurch is here to make you think, react, and to decide where you stand on the issues of porn," Craig Gross told *Sojourners*. "We're not here to sling mud, but to shove the envelope and try and do some good."

Sojourners Magazine

Rev. Stephen Kendall (centre), principal clerk of General Assembly, and Rev. Kirk Summers, senior minister of New St. James, London, Ont., watch as
 ▼ Ruth McDermid cuts a cake celebrating the church's 171st anniversary.



▲ The Westminster Missionary Society of Westminster, Calgary, held an Indian dinner for the congregation. Rev. Dr. Ian Gray, minister of Westminster, showed slides he took when he was part of the delegation attending the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Presbyterian Church in Chichaniya, India, in 2003. Agnes Hislop, also a member of the delegation, was a special guest for the evening. Pictured helping to prepare the dinner are: (front, L-R) Janet Neil, Shirley Barnes, Catherine Pearsall, Lyla Stevens and Margaret Ritchie. In the back are Clay and Kathy Swallowell.



▲ The congregation of Chedoke Church, Hamilton, Ont., recently introduced the elder emeritus program. Shown are the first recipients of the honour: (L-R) Bonnie Heath (accepting for her husband, John), Robert Montgomery, Elgin McNabb, William Welsh, Margaret Laing (accepting for her husband, William) and Margaret Taylor. Each received a framed photo of one of the church's stained glass windows and a certificate of achievement.

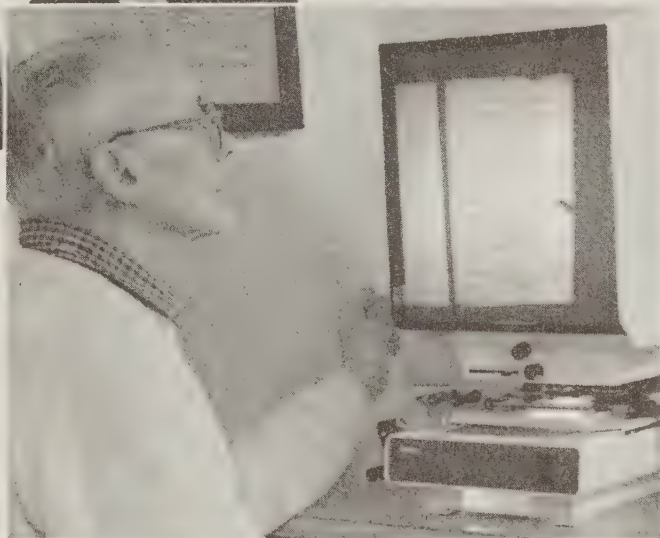


◀ A commercial-strength dishwasher was donated to the congregation of St. Paul's, Glace Bay, N.S., by Florrie Barrett, a longtime member of the church and member of the board of managers. Admiring the dishwasher with her is Angus MacVicar, elder and member of the board.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Photographs will not be returned. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.



▲ Worship at St. Andrew's, Whitby, Ont., has recently been enhanced by liturgical dance, featuring the group Anointed Joy. The group recently performed at the 130th General Assembly.



◀ Grant MacKenzie is shown viewing archival information on a new microfilm reader purchased with a gift from the Standfast Class women's group of Knox-Calvin, Harriston, Ont. The Knox-Calvin history room incorporates historical material from three churches: Knox, Harriston; Calvin, Rothsay (which amalgamated with Knox in 1968); and Guthrie, which operated in Harriston from 1877 to 1923.

Forty-seven elders participated in an elders training seminar held by the Presbytery of Kingston at St. Andrew's, Belleville, Ont. Rev. Anne-Marie Jones (left), minister of St. Andrew's, and guest speaker Rev. Dr. George Vais are joined by elders (L-R) Carol Collins, Jean Hopkins, Tom Conley and Colleen Martin.



▲ The congregation of Knox, Sheffield, Ont., honoured Gladys Grummet on her retirement as church organist with the presentation of a plaque recognizing her dedication and many years of service. Cake and coffee were served following the service.



▲ Organist Dorothy Smith sits at the console of the new organ, purchased and paid for in less than a year thanks to the organ fund of Knox, Vernon, B.C. The congregation also recently celebrated the completion of an addition to the church, which includes a new hall and an enlarged kitchen.

Christians are on the front lines everywhere

— first

It is a myth that the church just follows along to do its modest bit

by Brian Stewart

It is a nostalgic moment to stand before this 160th anniversary convocation at Knox College. Exactly 40 years ago this morning, I put down my pen at 11:41 a.m. after writing my last ever exam before graduating from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Toronto, in 1964. I was chomping at the bit to start my career and to confront the challenges ahead. As it turned out, career challenges often became more exciting and challenging than I had imagined. The '60s were a famously adventurous time in which to start out — but so is today.

Forty years ago, we young journalists were pretty cocky. We thought ourselves good at sorting out how the future would unfold. For instance, we were *certain*:

- the Cold War would outlast our lifetime, and the Soviet Union would just get stronger. They might beat the Americans to the moon but at least they'd never threaten our Canadian game of hockey.
- India and China would sadly face nothing but decline, having no possible economic prospects ahead. Nor were there long-term prospects for

that improbable long-haired rock group from Liverpool we'd just seen on Ed Sullivan's TV show. They would disappear into oblivion by Christmas. As for Hollywood, well, certainly it had produced its last biblical film — no market for those in future.

- and the old institutions would fade away: the monarchy would be gone long before the end of the century and so would most of the church — except for the pope who, needless to say, would be yet another Italian.

How's that for foresight? Actually, few firm predictions prove accurate over the years, whether from journalists, futurologists, sociologists or, need I say, intelligence agencies. This suggests an obvious note of caution: be wary of bold predictions about this or that "trend that seems irreversible" and don't take too much to heart the gloomy "death knells for a way of life." The media loves these. But we all see through a glass darkly. Over the years, I've found many institutions, like great university colleges, mainstream churches, even the old

hyper-modest Presbyterian Church, are a lot tougher, more flexible and formidable than we think.

I'm no theologian, so forgive any blunders on that ground. But what has truly surprised me over many years is not the triumph of trends, which flicker and fade like shadows at summer twilight, but rather the survival of spiritual hunger. This, and a religious "force field" that springs from it — the human drive to serve and to help others. It is so much greater than I had imagined. I've seen it blaze forth in places far darker and more threatening than I could have imagined. The surprise, I suppose, was my surprise. For this force has been there, after all, from the very beginning of Christianity and, mysteriously, never seems to weaken or grow weary.

I want to tell you something I have observed as a reporter and finally come to believe very deeply. For many years, I've been struck by the rather blithe notion, spread in many circles (including the media) and taken up by a large section of our younger population, that organized, mainstream Christianity has been reduced to a musty, dimly lit backwater of contemporary life. You've all heard the arguments. In a fragmented society, the church drifts unclear of direction — a fading force. Well, I'm here to tell you, from what I've seen in my ringside seat at events over the decades, there is nothing further from the truth. The notion is a serious distortion of reality. I have found there is NO other movement or force closer to the raw truth of wars, famines, crises and the vast human predicament than organized Christianity in action. And there is no alliance more determined and dogged in action than church workers, ordained and laity, when mobilized for a common good. These Christians are right on the front lines of committed humanity today and, when I want to find that front, I follow their trail.

It is a vast front, stretching from the most impoverished reaches of the developing world to the hectic struggle to preserve caring values in our own towns and cities. I have never been able to reach these front lines without finding Christian volunteers already in the thick of it — mobilizing congregations that care and being a faithful witness to truth. The

Photo by David Harris



primary light in the darkness and, so often, the only light.

This is something the media, diplomats and government officials rarely acknowledge. For religion confuses many. So front-line efforts of Christianity usually do not make headlines and, unfortunately, this feeds the myth that the church just follows along to do its modest bit. I repeat: I've never reached a war zone, famine group or crisis anywhere that some church organization was not

regarded the church as a rather tiresome irrelevance. What ultimately persuaded me otherwise — and I took a lot of persuading — was the reality of Christianity's mission, physically and in spirit, before my very eyes.

It wasn't the attraction of great moments of grandeur — although I admit covering this Pope on six of his early trips abroad, including his first trip to Mexico and his epic returns to Poland, certainly shook any assumptions I had of

"accidents" that really did happen in that frightening climate of oppression. Just like the movies.

A few of us met Lech Walensa alone on this stairwell as he slipped out to mass. "Are you frightened?" one of us asked.

He stopped, looking surprised at the thought. He answered in a voice of steel: "No, I am afraid of no one and nothing. Only my God." And he walked out alone into the night.

It was a transcendent moment. Here in this dingy stairwell was purest courage and conscience backed by Christian faith. I suddenly realized no force of empire or terror could ever extinguish it. Years later, in Poland again, in East Germany, in Czechoslovakia, in Romania ... I watched that empire crumble away before civil rights movements that often began in equally dingy little church halls and basements. The outside world never even knew about these early gatherings — and would not have taken them seriously if it had. A lot of good things start out quietly in humble church halls.

There were other moments. I witnessed Bishop Desmond Tutu in Soweto, South Africa, under apartheid, as he counselled Christians of all races how to mobilize against injustice without losing their humanity. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had done this in the American segregated South, after he'd got his movement rolling in some Birmingham church halls.

I witnessed so many other church efforts — saving children in Mozambique from life on garbage dumps, schools for illiterate ex-field hands in the slums of Brazil, the quiet comforting of runaways and addicts in a thousand asphalt city jungles, small groups of Christians visiting the lonely and mentally fragile in low-income boarding house flats, the Out of the Cold groups in many churches, famine camps where Christians feed, save and comfort the dying, somehow keeping everyone's morale up on the worst days. In my mind, I was struck by some words tolling again and again like a bell: "Even here," churches seemed to say, "Even here," however remote or wretched or dangerous, "Even here," we will be by your side, even to the end.

One memory. The murderous civil war in El Salvador in the early 1980s was a war of almost casual massacres.



Children living in a village of displaced persons in South Wollo, Ethiopia often rely on assistance from NGOs to meet their subsistence needs.

there long before me. Sturdy, remarkable souls, usually too kind to ask, "What took you so long?"

I don't slight any of the hard work done by other religions or those wonderful secular NGOs I've dealt with so many times over the years. They work closely with church efforts; they are noble allies. (All working together last year brought emergency food relief to 47 million people around the world! The greatest relief operation in history, the United Nations tells me. But bet you didn't see that success trumpeted in the news.) Yet, so often, in desperate areas, Christian groups are there first, labouring heroically during the crisis and continuing on long after all the media and the visiting celebrities have left.

I came to this admiring view slowly and reluctantly. At the start of my career, I'd largely abandoned religion for I, too,

Christianity as a fading force. The millions upon millions gathered was impressive, but I was more moved by individual moments of character and courage that seem to be anchored to some deep core within Christianity.

I remember a dim stairwell in Gdansk, Poland. The first, unbelievable crack in the mighty Communist empire, which had so often proclaimed triumph over religion, occurred in Poland in the early 1980s when the Solidarity movement, supported by the church, rose to challenge tyranny. A most unlikely little shipyard electrician, Lech Walensa, led the movement. Later he'd win the Nobel Prize and become president of Poland; but, when I met Walensa, he was isolated, had been jailed and his life so often threatened I thought he was a dead man walking. We all assumed security forces were arranging one of those convenient

We came to quake before the term “right-wing death squads” that would kill any they imagined in favour of real reform, from landless peasants to Archbishop Oscar Romero in his cathedral, even to nuns. And pity any journalist they ran across. We always made a strict rule to be back in the capital before dark; it was suicidal to be on the roads at night.

One afternoon, while interviewing small groups of landless refugees well to the north, we misjudged the time. The light began to thicken, and jungle sounds seemed to grow heavy with menace. As the air grew clammy, we could all sense each other’s growing nervousness. Just as we were furiously packing up, a delegation of refugee elders begged us to spend the night because, they pleaded, death squads were active in the area and perhaps our presence might avoid the kidnapping of males or, worse, a massacre.

It was one of those moments when I cursed the day I’d become a foreign correspondent. We, too, were targets. So we debated and rationalized, as scared people do. We needed to get back as a satellite feed was waiting and jobs were on the line. What good would it do if we were killed too and the story never got out? Yet, how could we leave?

We were still debating when an old station wagon raced into camp in a cloud of dust. Out stepped three Christian aid workers bearing a Red Cross flag. They listened to the discussion and finally insisted: “The journalists must go. It’s critical they get word out that you’re at risk here. We’ll stay the night and perhaps we can protect you.” All over that awful war, there were small Christian groups trying to stave off killings. And so we left, with inexpressible relief. Later, we learned the night’s protection by these Good Samaritans worked; there were no killings. But I’ve often wondered what I’d have done if that battered station wagon had not arrived at that moment.

Courage facing down terror. I can hardly tell you how common such action is. This very night, somewhere in El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala, some hillside in Brazil, volunteers from a local parish will be out trying to protect the weakest from political or criminal attacks, saying: “You don’t harm them without coming through us first. ‘Even

here’ God’s message will be heard.”

Today in Southern Sudan, aid workers are likely guiding bands of women and young children across rivers to safety as they flee modern-day slave raiders from the North. I’ve worked behind the lines there, filming such gangs in flight. Incredibly, the Christian anti-slavery work of Dr. Livingstone has to continue.

When there are human rights abuses anywhere, the church is often the first into action — for who has better sources on the ground? Church reports often help galvanize Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations into effective action.

I’d like to state clearly something about how the outside world usually gets

those Christians aren’t there first!” I was never able to.

I rather regret that the term “muscular Christianity” has gone out of use because a lot of the Christianity I’ve seen is very hard muscular work. There’s lots of sweat and many dirty hands.

Many of us in news crews noticed something else, hard to put into words. So often, after a day in the field filming volunteers at work, we would be sitting back over our nightly drink and one of us would say something like: “Strange people those, know what I mean? There’s just *something different* about them. *They’ve got something* that we don’t.” I remembered Aristotle talked of a state of *eudaimonia*, where a form of human hap-

**‘Even here,’ churches seemed to say, ‘Even here,’
however remote or wretched or dangerous,
‘Even here,’ we will be by your side, even to the end**

to know of famines and mass suffering. In 1984, along with my friend Michael Buerk of BBC fame, I first carried the story of the great Ethiopian famine on television. The world reacted as we all know, and TV was given much of the credit for saving millions. *But we were not the first!* We went because, for months, church and aid groups on the ground had seen famine coming and had been beseeching the world to take notice. When we finally managed to get in, against considerable Ethiopian government resistance, these groups showed us where to go, gave us rides on their relief flights into the mountains and mapped out where and how the world had to react.

These Christian “foreign legionnaires,” as I’ve come to think of them, never cease to amaze. Once, flying to a disaster story, our twin-engine plane had to make an emergency refuelling stop at a nearly deserted landing strip in the dense jungle of Central Africa. We stepped out into the middle of absolutely nowhere, it seemed, only to be greeted by a cheerful Dutch Reformed minister offering tea. My veteran cameraman, Mike Sweeny, later sighed in exasperation, “Do you think you could ever get us to a story somewhere, anywhere, where

pininess emerges when based on a “flourishing” life in which spirit and intellect are used to the full for the good of all. Yes, these Christians seemed to be flourishing. C.S. Lewis wrote of Christianity producing “a good infection.” Christian work on the front lines infects those around them, even many who are not Christian, with a sense of Christ’s deep mystery and power. I’ve felt it. It changes the world. Still.

I’m often asked if I lost belief in God covering events like Ethiopia, then called “the worst hell on Earth.” Actually, like others before me, it was precisely in such hells that I rediscovered religion. I saw so many countless acts of human love and charity — total respect for the most forsaken, for ALL of life. I was confronted by the miracle of our humanity. And I felt again the “good infection” of Christian volunteers and heard again those words tolling: “Even here ... Even here.”

Just witnessing good deeds, however daring, is not quite enough, I know. I felt lost on the front lines without a deeper understanding of Christianity. I needed just the kind of theological guidance that graduates from Presbyterian theological schools will have to give.

I once celebrated Christmas in secret, along with five or six colleagues in



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Beirut, during the worst moments of the murderous civil war in the '80s. We were among very few outsiders left in the western (Muslim) part of the city. That December, things got so explosive one extremist militia threatened to fire on any Christian celebration they saw — even Christmas lights. (I hasten to add this was completely uncharacteristic of Muslims there who couldn't have been kinder or more tolerant of strangers, despite years of war's provocation. But this small minority was murderous in its hate and had patrols out looking for us.)

Well, we foreign correspondents were as wild a carousing band of cynical hacks as you'd find anywhere. But you never fully value Christianity and its forms until they are denied you. So we decided to have our Christmas, whatever the threat. We hung blankets over the window to avoid attention from the patrolling militia outside, bought each other \$4-limit presents, even made a funny little tree with real, flickering candles. Lots of fun, homesickness and quiet reflection — a moment I'll never forget. And, yet, something was missing. We still didn't know our way through this religious moment. We needed a guide to the Bible, even a small sermon, to fully grasp the overpowering emotion that clutched at our throats.

My experience has convinced me that Christianity is best shared with others. I'm no longer one who can say, I'll just do it my way. Christianity needs organization and, dare I say the word, even institutions. In Rodney Stark's study of *The Rise of Christianity*, he notes that one of the main reasons for the Christian faith's first rapid growth was the galvanic example it gave the world of its organization for the good of all, Christian and pagan alike.

Beyond organization, the church must also have trained members to deal with the perplexing, endlessly challenging intellectual depths of Christianity — theology that is profound, but also capable of being shared and spread out before all. It needs guides who can mobilize mind and spirit — as well as that humble church hall with its coffee, biscuits and triangular-shaped sandwiches.

The front lines I speak of are not only found on some hilltop in Ethiopia or in

the sinister dusk of a distant jungle. You don't have to go abroad in the "Christian Foreign Legion" to find yourself in the thick of action. The front lines run through our own society, through our cities, through our campuses. Yes, "Even here." And the church is to the fore, far out in front of the media and the politicians in dealing with the needs of our fragmented society.

In whatever community you serve, you'll find extraordinary challenges — aging, addictions, homelessness, spiritual despair. You'll also have fabulous moments as you help celebrate that uplifting spiritual hunger I spoke of — that desire to serve, to celebrate, to sing out and to come together in the kind of flourishing joy that leads to fullness in living.

What life is compressed within a single church! You'll have to deal with fractious church committees, you'll be lobbied by this side or that and, all the while, you'll have to make sure the bills are paid. You'll face moments of career frustration. But I've covered all the so-called glamour professions from show business to high politics and, believe me, *everyone* gets these moments.

There will be times of maximum challenge when all your skills are tested to the full. Imagine ministers who had to preach right after September 11th. You'll have to work within a society facing far more stresses and religious and ethnic complexities than we could imagine back in the '60s. A richer society in so many ways — and the challenges are exciting. Your church hall could be very busy.

And when faced with these challenges, even if they seem overwhelming, I think you'll find, as I have, an amazing moment comes. When you remember back over all you've learned, over the confidence you've built up, and you suddenly say to yourself, "Yes, I can do this. I can face this. I'm ready."

Godspeed as you set out — to the front lines. **R**

Brian Stewart, a member of St. Andrew's (King Street), Toronto, is a journalist, host of the television foreign affairs show *CBC News: World View* as well as a senior correspondent on *The National*. Mr. Stewart's address to the Knox College convocation on May 12 is published with permission.

Presbyterian history holds some surprises

And the oldest Presbyterian congregation in Canada is ...

by Stephen Hayes

Here's a short quiz of interest to every Canadian Presbyterian:

1. What is the oldest Presbyterian congregation in Canada?
2. When was it founded?
3. Which racial group started it?

Here are the answers:

1. St. Andrew's, Lunenburg, N.S.
2. 1753
3. German

History is often surprising. Most people would have assumed Scots founded our first congregation. But the first Presbyterian church in Canada was formed by German-speaking Calvinists. An amazing fact when almost all the other early Presbyterian churches in this country were started by various branches of Presbyterianism from Scotland. This is a good reminder that we are part of a wide family that includes many racial groups.

A German-speaking Swiss blacksmith was the first minister of St. Andrew's, Lunenburg. It remained a German-speaking congregation until the calling of Donald Fraser in 1838. The 2003 Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly lists St. Andrew's as having 226 members. Until recently, the minister was Rev. Laurence Mawhinney, who also serves the town as mayor.

In the April Presbytery Profile, the *Record* stated that St. Andrew's, Quebec City, is "the oldest established Presbyterian congregation in the country." Since this church was started in 1759, six years after the Lunenburg church, that statement is not quite correct. What St. Andrew's, Quebec City, has always claimed is that it is "the oldest congregation of Scottish origin in Canada dating from

1759." The qualification is important and, in effect, tips the hat to Lunenburg.

St. Andrew's, Quebec City, was started by Rev. Robert MacPherson, one of General Wolfe's chaplains who, along with some Scottish soldiers, stayed in Canada after the battle on the Plains of Abraham. So our Scottish Presbyterian origins in Canada were military.

We are part of a wide family that includes many racial groups

St. Andrew's, Quebec City, has had a rich and colourful history. Its third minister was Rev. Alexander Spark, a representative of the Moderate Party of the Church of Scotland. For a time, he was the only Moderate in Canada. Yet, Mr. Spark was a surprisingly modern man, certainly brilliant and, perhaps, even a genius. His life was full of surprises, and studying him yields the conclusion that we ought not to be in haste to label the Moderates, or any other group for that matter, with any dismissive label.

Rev. John Cook served St. Andrew's, Quebec City, from 1836 until 1883.



St. Andrew's, Lunenburg, N.S.

Another amazing man. While minister there, he also served as principal of both Morrin College in Quebec City and Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. He is best remembered, however, as the first moderator of our denomination in 1875. Canada Post even issued a stamp in his memory, and the street the church is on is appropriately named Cook Street.

St. Andrew's, Quebec City, is easily one of the main heritage sites of our national church. The building dates from 1810, the kirk hall from 1829 and the manse from 1837. Immediately behind these buildings is the edifice that housed Morrin College, a college of our church in the 19th century. All this and within the walled city of old Quebec!

So we rejoice in our oldest congregation, St. Andrew's, Lunenburg, and also our oldest congregation of Scottish origin, St. Andrew's, Quebec City. If you are in Lunenburg or Quebec City, drop by for a visit! **R**

Rev. Dr. Stephen Hayes was inducted in May as minister of St. Andrew's, Quebec City.

Drawing the line — the promise of money or the faith in numbers?

Time has run out for the Presbytery of Montreal

Over the past 40 years, a shrinking membership and increased expenditures has pointed to drastic changes for Montreal Island's Presbyterian churches. In September, a strategic planning report suggested that several congregations should close or merge ... just as some membership numbers are finally looking up.

by Harvey Shepherd

In 1963, Presbyterian congregations on Montreal Island had 7,669 members. Four decades later that number is less than a third. While the number of members slides, the buildings in which they worship gain in real estate value. Striking a balance between these two sets of numbers was the subject of a controversial strategic planning report released late last summer.

"In several cases," the report says, "Presbyterian congregations are housed in buildings of tremendous financial value.... Buildings of a value of between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 are housing congregations with Sunday attendance of 35 to 45 members/adherents. At the same time, there are, within the presbytery, ministries and congregations that would thrive if provided with the financial support which is tied up in largely unused structures."

The 94-page report suggests that two congregations close, four others merge into two and another become a guest in its present building, reducing the number of

congregations on Montreal Island to 15 from 19. Funds from the sale of buildings would be used to boost ministry among immigrants and francophones and in outlying suburbs. As reported in the *Record* in June, the strategic group convener, Rev. Clyde Ervine, confirmed that they would

Knox, Crescent, Kensington and First Presbyterian Church has assets in excess of \$1.5 million and yet the leadership of the congregation appears to be able to speak of these funds only in terms of how many years they might allow the congregation to survive

— *strategic planning report*

be looking at a reinvestment of resources to provide congregations with greater financial stability. The four-member committee was formed a year ago to look at how the church should respond to the trend of membership decline.

Janet Dimock, co-clerk of the session at Montreal West Presbyterian, said the

report was "a body blow." Her church is slated to close by June 2005. Though its membership is down to a tenth from the 500 it had in the 1960s, she says there have been recent successes to rebuild its numbers. Howard Davidson, chairman of the board of managers and treasurer,

argues the closing is a cash grab by the presbytery. He notes the church is in a currently hot real estate location. "It would make a beautiful condominium project. It's probably worth a million bucks."

Bart Alexander, a Presbyterian seminarian who worships at a local Tai-

wanese- and English-language church, said efforts are afoot to recruit a "renewal troop" of volunteers from various Presbyterian churches who would temporarily worship at the Montreal West church and serve in its Sunday school, in outreach ministries and so on. He said his minister, Rev. Hui-Chi Tai, reports that the formula has had some success in Taiwan.

Wilfred Kangong, originally from Cameroon, is a member of First Presbyterian Church in the largely working-class borough of Verdun. He said the presbytery should focus on members and not on money. His congregation sold its building for \$650,000 recently and is looking at how it could use the funds for outreach, perhaps in French-speaking ministry. It currently rents space in a United church.

Knox, Crescent, Kensington and First Presbyterian Church membership has declined over the past 40 years from 1,400 to 200. It is "now on the verge of crisis" the committee reports, even though its location in West-End N.D.G. (Notre Dame de Grâce) district is in "one of the most dynamic and interesting areas of the city." The committee also recommended that KCK&F be given about two years to move toward "significant changes" in leadership structure and its approach to mission and the local community.

"This congregation has assets in excess of \$1.5 million and yet the leadership of the congregation appears to be able to speak of these funds only in terms of how many years they might allow the congregation to survive," the report states. "With a current annual budget deficit of \$150,000 the congregation anticipates that it will be able to survive for approximately 15 years.... It would be better, we suggest, to spend this money in a flourish of hopeful mission than to let it slip away in years of decline." Ken Harris, clerk of the session at KCK&F, said the congregation itself recognizes the problems and welcomes the opportunity for open discussion.

"Christians should be extremely careful about telling other Christians how they should serve God," said Tucker Carrington, a member of Côte des Neiges Presbyterian Church in the multi-



Members of Montreal churches meet in September to discuss a report that suggests that two congregations close, four others merge into two and another become a guest in its present building.

ethnic Montreal district of that name. Though he praised some of the more general strategic and theological sections of the report, he said top-down recommendations on specific issues had confused and distressed people in the presbytery. He opposed a proposal to merge his own congregation into a Presbyterian church in the nearby affluent borough called the Town of Mount Royal, arguing that his church's location in the Côte des Neiges district is strategic for its evangelical outreach.

The report proposes that some of the funds from sales of church buildings be used to boost ministry in two congregations in growing areas in and just off the tip of the West Island: Westminster Presbyterian Church in Pierrefonds and Île Perrot Presbyterian Church. But Duse Bryan, a member of the Westminster church, said she was skeptical about whether "throwing money at" these congregation would do the trick.

Not all reaction was negative, however. Ephraim Scott Memorial Church cur-

rently has fewer than 70 members, down from about 500 in the late 1950s. It would sell its church in the West-End Snowdon district at a bargain price to Chambit Presbyterian Church, which is now in cramped quarters in the low-income Point St. Charles district and hopes to add English worship to its present Korean. The Ephraim Scott congregation would retain access to the building. This recommendation was favourably received by both congregations.

Allan Spurr of Maisonneuve-St. Cuthbert's, the only Presbyterian church in the predominantly French-speaking east end of Montreal, responded with qualified enthusiasm to the idea of making the congregation, which now worships in English, bilingual.

The strategic planning committee said its recommendations will be reworked before the Montreal Presbytery takes its first official look at them at its regular meeting on Oct. 19. **R**

Harvey Shepherd is a Montreal journalist.

Out with the old, in with the new

A Toronto congregation grew tired of the status quo and adopted a new style of leadership — hoping to ensure its health and vitality for years to come

Presbyterian churches in Canada, Scotland, Australia and the United States ordain elders for life. But they don't all require elders to serve on session for life. For a denomination trying to overcome dwindling numbers, is lifetime service too much?

by Amy Sedlezky

As medical science becomes more advanced, people are living healthier and longer. They also remain active in their congregations well into their later years. In Canada, where ruling Presbyterian elders usually serve on session for life, leadership positions are often filled by older members. But younger members can be intimidated by the prospect of serving on session for a lifetime as well as treading on someone else's territory.

"In a lot of congregations, the same people have been doing the same job for so long they have ownership of it," said David McIntyre, clerk of session at Glenview, Toronto. "No one wants to step on anyone's toes."

Realizing such a situation can stifle growth, Glenview's laity and clergy decided to make radical changes to their leadership style by moving to term service on session — a change permitted by General Assembly in 1996. (About 80 congregations across Canada have received presbytery approval for the transition, but it is not known how many have made the change.) Elders are still ordained for life but they serve on session for two-, four- or six-year periods. At

Glenview, new members are elected every two years; elders not on session are freed for visiting and contributing to church life through ministry teams.

Glenn Schmelzle, one of the younger elders on session and part of a communications ministry team, thinks the new system helps the church offer more efficient, effective ministry. "There used to be a lot of time and people spent on the organizational structure," he said. "The session was very large and it oversaw everything — like a field marshal who sees the whole battlefield. But it was also the foot soldier handling everything else. You had all of this organized horsepower and a lot of talented people, but it was fettered by the structure."

A Reformed idea

Having ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church dates back to the 1500s when John Calvin and, later, John Knox sought a new form of church government that incorporated New Testament patterns. Elders, elected annually, were disciplinary leaders who oversaw the moral and spiritual behaviour of their congregations. Calvin taught that elders should be nominated by ministers and only from among

public officials. In the *First Book of Discipline*, Knox altered Calvin's teaching by granting elders disciplinary authority over the minister as well. Elders were nominated from among "every rank and class" and by members of the congregation. The *Second Book of Discipline* brought further amendments. Elders were allowed to rotate service following the biblical rotation of the Levites' service in the temple. An elder's duties were also expanded to include visiting the sick and assisting the minister. Today, *Living Faith* requires elders to "share with the minister in the leadership, pastoral care and oversight of the congregation."

The quest for new blood

Excluding fast-growing Korean congregations, Glenview has the highest membership of Presbyterian churches in Toronto. But numbers have been dropping. Although the church's membership was not low enough to be considered a crisis, the congregation wanted to be proactive. The decline stabilized in 1997 at about 530 members, half of what it was 20 years ago.

"Many urban congregations are in a similar situation as ours," said Christopher

Presbyterians Visiting in Mission

A Mission Interpretation Newsletter

Education for Mission, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, October 2004

"Wow, what an experience!" The woman had recently returned from a mission visit to Eastern Europe and was calling to tell me about it. Her voice was filled with excitement and passion. She had a story to share.

"What an experience!" These words are repeated again and again by people who have visited our church's partners, our mission staff, and especially our brothers and sisters in faith in places around the world. This newsletter tells you a little about their stories, about the value of mission visits and about the services offered by the mission interpretation office to help congregations in planning a trip.

Since 2000, mission visit opportunities have been offered to congregations, presbyteries and synods through the Education for Mission department of our church. This is in response to Presbyterians across Canada who desire to become involved in mission in a more personal way. They want to visit our church's partners in other countries, experience something of their lives and culture, mutually share their faith stories, and see for themselves the work being accomplished by our partners and mission staff.

There have been many trips to destinations that include Central America, Eastern Europe, Malawi and Cuba. People have returned more informed and excited about mission. Not only is their commitment to the work of the wider church renewed but people have new energy for mission in their own communities. The trips have fulfilled the wish of Presbyterians to work in hands-on mission, and have allowed participants to see in a concrete way how funds given to *Presbyterians Sharing* and Presbyterian World Service and Development are well used. And, for many individuals, these trips have been life-altering spiritual pilgrimages.

Most mission visits fall into one of three categories: an exposure trip, a work mission trip or a clergy study trip. An exposure trip involves travelling to one or more countries in order to learn about the work and lives of our church partners and to meet our mission staff. A work mission trip includes the added element of spending a number of days working on a project that has been identified as a need by one of our partners. A clergy study trip includes a study component related to the historical, cultural and religious context of the place being visited, e.g., reformed theology in Eastern Europe or contextual theology in Central America.

The main emphasis of every mission visit is education. Every trip includes visits to as many partners and PCC staff in the region as possible. This will include an orientation session where an overall description of the work is given, and outings to various projects and communities for a first-hand look and an opportunity to spend time and build relationships with people. Also there will be some time spent learning about and visiting places of historical and geographical interest and significance to the country. If the trip includes a work project, this is a time of much learning, relationship-building, and mutual sharing of faith.

A mission visit is an exciting opportunity to be a part of the furthering of God's reign in the world. It is empowering and transformational for the individual and the congregation. I encourage you to consider the possibility of your congregation participating in a mission visit in the next few years.

Barbara Nawratil
Mission Interpretation Coordinator



WOW! WHAT AN EXPERIENCE!

Where Have We Been?

2001

Knox, Listowel, ON - El Salvador

2002

Lakeview, Thunder Bay, ON - El Salvador

St. Andrew's, Thunder Bay, ON - El Salvador

Knox, Dunville, ON - El Salvador and Guatemala

Korean Myung Sung, Toronto, ON - Guatemala

A former *FLAMES* group, ON - Nicaragua

2003

Lakeview, Thunder Bay, ON - El Salvador

Presbytery of Sarnia - Nicaragua

St. Paul's, Simcoe, ON - Guatemala

Dayspring, Edmonton, AB - El Salvador

Knox, Dunville, ON - El Salvador and Guatemala

Synod of British Columbia - El Salvador and Nicaragua

Study Tour, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine

Theme: A History of the Reformation from the Past to the Present

Study Tour, El Salvador, Cuba

Theme: Theological Reflection based on Community Reality

Knox, Waterloo, ON - Malawi

2004 (January - July)

St. Andrew's, Thunder Bay, ON - El Salvador

West Vancouver, Vancouver, BC - Guatemala

Blue Mountain Pastoral Charge, NS - Cuba

Presbytery of Algoma and North Bay - Malawi

Presbytery of Barrie - Ukraine

Synod of Atlantic Provinces - El Salvador

What Have We Done?

- We worked with our church's partners to repair schools in Ukraine and El Salvador.
- We visited a women's organization working to bring justice and self-sufficiency to Mayan women of Guatemala.
- We worked with our PWS&D partner CEIDEC to build a health clinic in Guatemala.
- We enjoyed a lively, vibrant worship service with Roma (gypsy) people in Ukraine.
- We built houses in El Salvador, working side-by-side with people who lost their homes in an earthquake.
- We learned about the Reformation in Eastern Europe.
- We worked with our PWS&D partner, CIVEMN, to build an open-air community learning centre in Nicaragua.
- We saw how children who must work in the streets in Nicaragua to stay alive can be helped by receiving an education.
- We heard how the church has survived through years of oppression in Hungary and Cuba.
- We worked with our partner CEIDEC in Guatemala to build a bamboo earthquake-resistant house.
- We saw how our partners are working with children left orphaned by the AIDS pandemic in Malawi.
- We worshipped at a Catholic community centre in Nicaragua. Denominational differences were diminished as we became one body in Christ through music and prayer.
- We learned how teaching good nutrition and agricultural practices is building up families in Nicaragua.
- We prayed, we sang, we listened to God's word, we looked inside ourselves, we changed.

CLERGY STUDY TOURS

Study tours offer a unique educational opportunity in that they combine a number of elements:

- a focused study (informal teaching, reflection, discussion) on a particular theme related to the context of the place/people being visited
- an opportunity to visit the mission partners and projects of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the mission staff in the area being visited
- a visit to historical and geographical places of interest
- exposure to the culture, art, food and scenic beauty of the region

***Clergy study tours are open to lay people as well.**

UPCOMING TOURS

October 2004–Hungary, Romania, Ukraine
Theme: A History of the Reformation from the Past to the Present
This tour is fully subscribed

March 2005–El Salvador
Theme: Commemoration of the Assassination of Archbishop Romero
Application deadline is December 15, 2004

A mission visit provides participants with the opportunity to:

Build relationships and share faith experiences with people in other countries

"As we drove up a steep, dusty road to visit a Presbyterian project in the hill country, we were struck by the indomitability of the human spirit. People with little land available had carved out arable patches on the sides of the mountains. The people we visited had very little for themselves. And yet the women of the community took up a collection for us. Meagre coins emerged from folds in clothing. The combined gifts of about thirty women were enough to buy us each a can of pear juice and a packet of cookies. I have never consumed anything with more gratitude in my life. This was a gift of sacrifice to us."

Nancy Farran, West Vancouver Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, BC
Guatemala, March 2004

"The main achievement of our trip was what we learned. We were shown areas of devastation caused by environmental and political forces, but also areas of hope. We met people who had lived through years of war and were now living with the consequences. We also met with people who live in homes and surroundings that most of us would find deplorable. Yet they would offer us their only chair to sit on, or their last piece of bread. We were shown again and again the strong faith of the Salvadoran people and we were reminded how quickly our faith wavers when things don't go our way."

Leanne Hart, Knox, Dunville, ON
El Salvador/Guatemala, April 2002



"Reflection, reading and dialogue with the other participants on the tour and with many people in the countries visited are integral elements of the study tour. Our guide, Jim Patterson, a minister of our church who is working in El Salvador, introduced our study group of four to the concept of "contextual theology." As we travelled we took time to learn about the country of El Salvador. We looked at its recent history and current realities and we were invited to examine and consider how faith groups are responding to the people of El Salvador in the context of that country's history and current situation."

Lori Ransom, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Toronto, ON
El Salvador/Cuba Study Tour, November 2003

Explore theological themes and participate in study groups

"We visited the theological seminary in Matanzas, Cuba where we spoke to an 89-year old theologian. He asked us to pray for the people of Cuba and to remember that history is determined by intercessors. This was the most profound moment of my trip."

The Rev. Calvin Crichton, Blue Mountain Pastoral Charge, NS
Cuba, April 2004


Experience personal transformation and spiritual growth

"The trip has influenced me. It has made my cry for the God of justice sound even louder than before and it has altered forever, I'm sure, my view of revolution."

The Rev. Ralph Fluit, Melville Presbyterian Church, Toronto, ON
El Salvador/Cuba Study Tour, November 2003

"I listen with a more compassionate ear to the news. I have become more aware of my purchases and how they influence the lives of those people we met in Central America. I see conditions in my own town that reflect a need for me to have Christ work through me and I cannot deny it anymore. One cannot make big changes alone, but if each of us does some small thing to influence a change, think of what might be accomplished!"

Sue Smith, Knox Presbyterian Church, Dunville, ON
El Salvador/Guatemala, October 2003



Meet with our mission staff and see the work being accomplished by our partners

"Following the two-week trip the group arrived home tired but much more knowledgeable about the mission work of our church and much more appreciative of the accomplishments of its overseas staff who serve under difficult conditions. I would encourage anyone interested in learning more about the international work of our church to participate in an exposure tour."

The Rev. Fred Speckeen,
Kelowna Presbyterian Church, Kelowna, BC
El Salvador/Nicaragua, November 2003

"I was so impressed by the courage and generosity of our guide, Ken Kim (The Presbyterian Church in Canada mission staff), who has committed himself to working to make things better for the people in Guatemala. He loves the country and the people and believes in what he is doing. He says he could spend his life in Guatemala doing this work."

Nancy Perry,
West Vancouver Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, BC
Guatemala, March 2004

Strengthen your congregation's commitment to mission in your own community

This is what I have come away with... a new commitment to work as Christ would have me work within my own community and beyond, to effect small but positive changes in the world."

Sue Smith, Knox Presbyterian Church,
Dunville, ON

El Salvador, Guatemala, October 2003

"We have all made a concentrated effort to reach out to the community. Each month we try to do an outreach either in our own community or in an area of need. We sponsored a coat drive for Evangel Hall in November. This was followed by a tour of the facilities and a promise to help further in the next year. In December we ran a gourmet soup kitchen with part of the proceeds going to Evangel Hall. This is all mission work that, for the most part, we never did before our trip. What started out as a two-week adventure has blossomed into a new awareness of what it means to be a Christian. We at Knox are endeavouring to explore just that and hoping to open the eyes of others along the way."

Leanne Hart, Knox Presbyterian Church,
Dunville, ON

El Salvador & Guatemala, April 2002

Learn about the culture and history of a country

"We learned much of the history of the Hungarian minority in the sub-Carpathian Ukraine and in Romania. Conditions of life are difficult, the communist mind-set is still evident. The tour of eastern Europe provided us with an entry into a world very different from our own, where freedoms and opportunities we take for granted are not available and the struggle to survive can be overwhelming. Our Hungarian Reformed cousins badly need the assistance that is being provided by the western churches, our own included. The faith and courage of many in their churches, who work in extremely difficult circumstances, is a sign of grace and hope for the people of Eastern Europe."

Pat Shaver, New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, ON

Eastern Europe, May 2003

Become Involved in Hands-on Mission

"Our mission trip included two work projects. In El Salvador we funded and helped to build three houses for families who had lost their homes in the 2001 earthquake. In Guatemala, we painted the interior and exterior of the Francisco Coll School. With the help of the children and guidance from our hosts, we were able to complete a mural on the outside court walls. However, the work projects were a small part of our mission trip. The main achievement of our trip was what we learned.

Leanne Hart, Knox Presbyterian Church, Dunville, ON
El Salvador/Guatemala, April 2002

During our four days in San Miguel las Pilas, we had the opportunity to get to know some of the people in the community. We visited with them in their homes and worked side-by-side digging trenches for the footings of a health centre, laying concrete blocks for the foundation, and tying bamboo poles for the walls. There was still much work to be done and we were sorry that we had to move on, but pleased that in some small way we had made a difference. It is an experience that none of us will ever forget."

Bob Ellis, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Simcoe, ON
Guatemala, February 2003

A WORD FROM A HOSTING PARTNER

Our church always works in mission with partners. This is one of the foundational principles that we follow as we seek to be the instruments of God's mission in the world. When we participate in a mission visit there is much to be gained in terms of faith-sharing, relationship-building and learning, but it is not one-sided. We gain so much when we experience a mission trip, and the partners with whom we work also gain something and really do appreciate our presence. The following is an excerpt of a letter received from PWS&D partner CIVEMN (a faith-based organization of Mennonite women working in education and community development in Nicaragua). This letter came after a group from Knox, Goderich, Ontario spent time with the community and participated in a work project.



"What a wonderful group! Our only limitation was the language but the most important communication is that of love and we could see love in everything they did. We are so happy to have hosted them and think that it was a fabulous experience for them as it was for us. We will pray for them so that God's grace, blessing and protection will reach them. Send our greetings to all when you contact them. Please let them know that we want to keep in touch in writing so that we know how they are and how their work is coming along in their church. They are very important to us."

God bless you.

Lillian Reyes,
Associate Executive Director
CIVEMN



ABOUT WORK PROJECTS

Many groups ask, “Should we do a work project when we go on our mission visit?”

This is a good question that requires careful reflection. We might easily overestimate the value of our good efforts and intentions in doing a work project without fully understanding the implications for our partners. Most often the value of a work project lies not in the actual work that is accomplished but in the strengthened relationships and understandings that occur as partners work side-by-side.

- Work tours recognize that people have different ways of learning. For some, working with their hands is a path to learning about God’s mission in the world. Transformation can happen when members work side-by-side with brothers and sisters from another culture.
- Work projects can help build relationships while meeting a community need. The local community learns about the people who support the work of the partner. Work team members develop deeper relationships with the communities they visit, experiencing first-hand the generosity, ability and dignity of their hosts.
- Transformation and building relationships are not the automatic outcome of a work project. Projects can be seen as patronizing and can become more harmful than helpful, especially if the project is not done well, or there is no local participation. The project must meet the community’s needs and be something they want to do. For this reason all work projects are done at the request and under the direction of a local partner.
- Doing a work project should not be the sole reason for a group to go to a developing country. When all of the expenses of a work project are taken into account (flights, travel, accommodation, staff and partner time), it is usually more efficient to send project funds to the partner who will hire local labour. However, when the long-term, mutual understanding that develops with the project is considered, the extra costs are worthwhile.

Adapted from PWS&D’s policy on *Mission Tour Projects*.

PREPARING FOR A MISSION VISIT

A mission visit is a major, expensive undertaking. To ensure that it is fruitful for the participants, your congregation and your hosts, much care and time should be put into preparation - not only into the logistics, but also the spiritual and emotional preparation of the participants. The entire process from beginning to end will take from 18 months to two years.

During this time, you will need to:

- undergo a process of discernment
- seek the blessing of the minister and session
- clarify goals and objectives for the trip
- select where you wish to travel
- become educated about the culture, history and language of the country you will be visiting
- participate in bible study and reflection
- prepare for travel (get immunizations, medication, passports, etc.)
- evaluate, debrief and share your stories when you return

The role of Mission Interpretation Coordinator is to coordinate all aspects of the mission visit for your congregation. This includes:

- visiting your congregation to present the mission visit program and answer questions
- providing you with resources, information and answers to questions
- providing a local leader (often a mission staff person) for your trip
- providing you with an itinerary and budget
- making all travel arrangements
- assisting you in your follow-up work

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Barbara Nawratil,
Mission Interpretation Coordinator
416-441-1111/1-800-619-7301 ext. 259
bnawratil@presbyterian.ca

YOUTH IN MISSION (YIM)

YIM is a program of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that encourages young people (ages 16-30) to get involved in mission. YIM volunteers choose to participate in short-term mission opportunities in Canada and around the world. Opportunities include manual labour, children's and camping ministries, music, drama and sports programs. Trips also include a strong educational component as young people learn about mission and experience a new environment.

YIM coordinator, Mary Chudley, says "We had a busy, exciting year. Where did we go in 2004?"

- To Nicaragua where we visited and worked with three of our church's partners.
- To Iona, Scotland, for a spiritual retreat, and to Edinburgh where we served in inner city ministries.
- To Hungary, Romania and Ukraine where we worked with our mission staff Steve Ross and Sonya Henderson in the implementation of summer camps.
- To Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church in central Saskatchewan, where we worked with the first nation community in hosting a vacation bible school for children."

For information about YIM 2005, see the August PC Pak
email yim@presbyterian.ca or visit www.presbyterian.ca/yim.



"I have a renewed understanding of God, and a closer relationship with God. I don't know if I am a stronger Christian yet, but I am definitely a more devoted and excited Christian."

— a YIM participant



Left to right: David McIntyre, Clerk of Session; Bob Fourney, minister of Glenview Church; Mary Walker, former Clerk of Session.

Woodbury, former clerk of session and convener of the future ministries team that helped guide the transition. "You have to grapple with the situation before it becomes a crisis. It's very difficult to marshal enough resources to reverse the situation when you're already declining. But if you identify the problem soon enough, it gives you enough time to help."

The change signalled the desire to attract and involve younger individuals and families, reach out more to the community and increase attachment to the church. Rev. Dr. Bob Fourney, minister at Glenview, called the transition "courageous" because many congregations focus solely on maintaining their numbers — an often necessary strategy for a church struggling with decline. But Glenview's members wanted to focus on turning their church into a dynamic, growing ministry. "We want to make sure we have a future," said Fourney.

Elderly members are disproportionately represented at Glenview, making decline inevitable and the church's future uncertain. Younger members can fill leadership positions, breathe new life into the church and offer insight into the needs of young people. Glenview is in an ideal spot to bring this demographic inside its doors. According to 1995 Statistics Canada data, Glenview's North Toronto community has a different face from most neighbourhoods in the city. Forty per cent of Glenview's area residents are between the ages of 25 and 44, compared to Toronto's average of about 36 per cent. Its mostly Eng-

lish-speaking population is also of British origin — a rarity in a city with the highest multicultural rate in the world.

Letting them lead

Bringing younger people into the church is only half the battle. New members need opportunities to get involved — especially in leadership roles. To help ease the transition, a committee was formed and, in April 2002, the report of the governance task force was submitted, providing concrete steps to implement the changes. To make room for up-and-

'Many urban congregations are in a similar situation as ours . . . But if you identify the problem soon enough, it gives you enough time to help'

comers, all 57 session members resigned. Then the congregation elected 12 of them to return to session and six new members to join them, reducing the size of session to 18. This streamlined the decision-making process and eliminated long meetings that accomplished little. Although some elders had served on session for 30 or 40 years, all members resigned their post willingly — a testament, said Woodbury, to their concern for the well-being of the church and their vision for the future.

The ministry teams are helping Glenview realize its vision. The teams focus

on Christian education, communications, congregational fellowship, finance and property, outreach and mission, pastoral care, and worship. Each team includes a session member and a convener who is not on session. At the beginning of the year, they present their action plans to session for approval and then are relatively autonomous for the rest of the year. Including the 18 session members, there are about 75 people in leadership roles at Glenview.

Members and adherents join teams that are particularly suited to their interests, skills and gifts. Calling them "ministry" teams promotes Glenview's belief that every layperson has a gift and is called to serve. "We don't 'volunteer' in the church," said Fourney. "It's not 'I'll do it if I want to.' We are called to ministry, and that gives a different perspective to what we do."

A sensitive shift

Releasing elders to use their gifts in other areas is considered a positive change. But asking elders to leave session after years of dedicated service can be difficult. To avoid hurt feelings, the old session was kept abreast of all plans, decisions and changes. "You have to remember the elders have always known what's going on and have been part of

the process, and that's no longer so," said David McIntyre, convener of the steering committee. "You have to be sensitive. Let them know what's happening and let them be part of it."

The congregation was also regularly updated with information in church bulletins, announcements before Sunday services and question-and-answer periods. Such communication was essential for success, said Mary Walker, who is part of the communications ministry team and a lifelong Glenview member. Her experience as clerk of session before and during the switch has given her

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6 Hoskin Avenue, Toronto upstairs in Seeley Hall
 (Sorry, not wheelchair accessible)

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Friday, October 22 6 pm - 10 pm
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Saturday, October 23 10 am - 3 pm

Sunday, October 24 Noon - 8 pm

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Or leave the St. George Subway Station, walk south from Bloor Street down St. George one block to the corner of Hoskin, turn left for 1 block and a bit, and there you are. Or take Wellesley Bus #94 to the door.

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WRITE

The Friends of the Library
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insight into what may work for other congregations contemplating leadership changes. "Have meetings with session and with the congregation about where you're going in the future," she said. "We looked at our future, and there were good things and things we couldn't change. You have to look deeply. There are talents that can be used."

Exercising her talents in other areas of church life is something Helen Oakes enjoys. A member of Glenview since 1952 and an elder for more than 30 years, she is no longer on session. She generally supports the changes but said it will take some time to adjust to her new role. Now part of the outreach and mission team, Oakes admits she has mixed feelings about the transition. "Sometimes people ask me what's going on and I tell them, 'I don't know any more than you do because I'm not on session.'"

Schmelzle realizes these elders may feel left out, but he said the ministry teams offer new opportunities to serve. "It's a trade-off. They no longer see the entire gamut of the church but they are deeply involved in their own groups," he said. Session members on ministry teams keep others informed about what's happening, and many elders feel they are making a more tangible contribution to the church, Schmelzle said.

Despite lingering reservations, Oakes admits she was glad, in one respect, to resign. "In a sense, I was happy to know there was an end to my 30 years of commitment and I was being released from some of my responsibilities."

Schmelzle hopes the changes make an impression on Glenview's visitors. "I didn't want these changes to be a back-room thing that you wouldn't experience if you just walked in," he said. "Someone who walks in on Sunday morning should notice something. Maybe they can't put their finger on it, but they'll say, 'Hey, this isn't the place I remember 10 years ago. This isn't the kind of thing I'd expect a Presbyterian church to be doing. They're doing something different here.'" **R**

To find out more about Glenview's new leadership system, visit www.glenviewchurch.ca or phone the church office at 416-488-1156.

Fresh thinking for a mounting problem

Consultants offer new hope for congregations struggling with decline

As society becomes increasingly secular and Canadians find more ways to spend their leisure time, attracting new members burdens many denominations. The Presbyterian Church is no exception. But it has an added challenge — much older members with few prospects for replacement. Amy Sedlezky reports that congregations are not alone in their plight. There are people who can help struggling congregations regain their footing, and the following strategies are a good place to start.

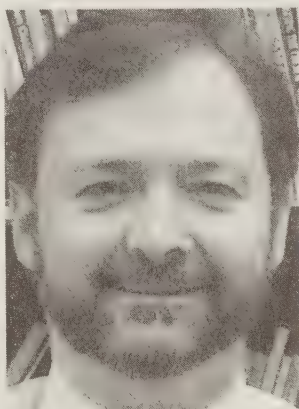
by Amy Sedlezky

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is declining. Societal changes and doctrinal challenges make it difficult for the church to maintain its distinctiveness while attracting seekers. Remembering to encourage spiritual growth in members can be tough when merely filling the pews is a concern. The task is often too much for a congregation to handle on its own. As Presbyterians watch their numbers drop — from fewer than 160,000 in 1991 to just under 130,000 in 2002, according to national church figures — the need for new solutions is becoming increasingly important.

Enter church consultants. They offer a new pair of eyes that are not emotionally attached to the congregation. “Consultants can raise a mirror to the congregation,” said Rev. Dr. Jim Czegledi, associate secretary for worship and evangelism with the national church’s Life and Mission Agency. “Sometimes it takes someone from outside to tell them about themselves. A consultant can unearth the magic that’s in them and get them to see it.”

According to the 2001 Statistics

Canada census, the median age of Presbyterians was 46, nine years higher than the national median and the highest of all reported denominations. (The median age is the point at which there are as many older people as younger). The church’s own 2000 research found the



‘The church is a volunteer, spiritual organism. Things are not implemented quickly; we have to take our time’

Rev. Dr. Jim Czegledi

median age to be 52. “Our older members are often our most vital,” said Czegledi, “but we’re not replacing them with new members when they die. The question is, 10 years from now, how many people can we expect to be in the pews without significant transformation and change?”

Gathering input and opinions

Helping congregations implement change is a common task for consultants. Potentials is a Canadian ecumenical consulting firm founded in 1995. Janet Marshall, who started the organization along with executive director Rev. Paul

MacLean, said a consultant provides clarity and creates a dynamic that enables constructive dialogue. “Change and growth in a church are anchored in the conversations a congregation has as its demographics change and about its identity,” she said. This discussion is imperative when creating a vision for the future.

"We get as many people working on the visionary process as possible."

Staff at Potentials believe congregations can help change lives. They work closely with a congregation to discover its culture and personality and use biblical examples to guide their strategies. "These are core pieces of our identity that we forget at our peril," said Marshall.

According to Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser, losing sight of Christ's place in a congregation's ministry is what can hamper growth and improvement. He helps congregations struggling with leadership and governance issues through GrowingChurches.org, a church consulting business he began in



'Mission statements are often too long, too general and have no strategic plan to implement'

Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser

2002. He said congregations need to return to their roots, and he challenges them to examine who they are and why they exist. "You have to go from the ground up," he said.

Encouraging spiritual growth in addition to growth in numbers is an integral component to becoming a healthy, vibrant church. The leaders at Chippawa Church in Niagara Falls recognized this and took it into their own hands to change. While struggling with how to entice adults to grow in their faith, Rev. Doug Schonberg and music coordinator David Moody created the Discipleship Project — a tool for encouraging, promoting and measuring adult spiritual growth and education.

An increase in adult education can impact the congregation's vitality since adults direct Sunday school, small groups and other congregational life activities. And although the goal of the program is not simply growth in numbers, it can be an indirect outreach tool. "When people are excited about their faith, they share it with others," said Schonberg. "It's intended to grow our people so they can mature and reach out on their own."

A sound investment

Consultants at Potentials work on issues such as church growth, conflict intervention, amalgamation and stewardship. They are usually called in when a congregation must undergo drastic change and cannot do it alone, or when it has tried to make changes several times on its own but has failed.

The cost for a consultant varies widely. A half-day consultation costs about \$300; a full day is usually \$500. A six- to nine-month in-depth process may cost \$10,000, and a year-long project involving entire presbyteries can be as much as \$60,000.

he tells them as if it's written on two tablets of stone," he said. "Or they might think a consultant walks in, tells you what to do and then rides off into the sunset. But that's not the case."

Czegledi said the real role of a consultant — corporate or otherwise — is to structure an environment for discussion and problem-solving and tease out the answers to a congregation's questions. He said six months to a year and a half is usually needed to develop and implement a plan. "Listening is a great part of the process, and you can't listen in one day," he said. "It's not as if we're a corporate culture. The church is a volunteer, spiritual organism. Things are not implemented quickly; we have to take our time."

The benefits of business

Fraser draws on his years of experience in church and secular sectors to help congregations realize their full potential. The former dean of St. Andrew's Hall at the University of British Columbia thinks there are valuable lessons to be learned from the business world, even though bringing that sector into the church can make people nervous. Like a successful business, a congregation must invest time in determining the strengths and gifts it has and how they work together — a step that is often tried but done incorrectly. "Mission statements are often too long, too general and have no strategic plan to implement," said Fraser, who manages Jazzthink Consulting for the secular world. Likewise, taking spiritual inventories can fall short of the desired result. "What do you do with the information? Do you take the time to sit down and align those talents?" he asks.

Most important, Fraser urges congregations to focus on possibilities rather than on problems. He tries to lead them back to the basics of their faith — the love of Jesus Christ and how his grace is reflected in the way they govern.

Commitment to Christ

While improving individual congregations is a worthy goal, higher hopes for the denomination are also needed. "I want the denomination to recover its pioneering spirit," said Fraser. This means having confidence in what Presbyterians offer and displaying those val-

Surprisingly, some congregations fail to implement a consultant's recommendations — even after spending the money. Czegledi said this is a common roadblock. Reluctance to follow through on good intentions often occurs because members of the congregation react differently to what is needed for improvement. "In some respects, it's like a grief experience," he said. "There's been a loss of self or certainty, and everyone responds differently to that. You never know how people are going to react."

Reservations and misconceptions

Before assessing what a congregation needs, Marshall meets with members to help ease uncertainties and to discuss problems. This early relationship is crucial, she said, as many people are unfamiliar with what consultants do.

Czegledi thinks part of the problem is that many congregations have a mistaken perception of what a consultant is. "People have the wrong view of the corporate model [of consultants]. They bring in an outside expert and view what

ues in ways that are creatively suited to the church's environment.

Trying to preserve the Presbyterian Church's distinctive character makes some congregations reluctant to rock the boat. Czegledi recognizes this trepidation and, although he thinks change is needed to ensure the health and longevity of the denomination, he believes there are some things that must not be forgotten. "Our strengths lie in our orthodox opinions and thought — our strong, biblical, Reformed focus. We have to preserve that. That's our unique voice."

He said the mission of the church — to preach the gospel to every generation — must be maintained. "We have to be doctrinally consistent with the past but take on new forms to fit the present and the future." He said worship is the most obvious way to do this. "Regardless of the style of worship, is the focus on Christ? If it is, then we're being doctrinally consistent regardless of style."

Growing spirit — changing lives

The Discipleship Project patterns its style after a popular family pastime —

board games. Members of the congregation take a course card from a display board that is mounted in a prominent place. Each card lists the name of a course (Alpha small group, weekend retreat, Bible study), the assigned course value (ranging from one to five depending on time involved, expense incurred and difficulty) and a course description. When the course is completed, the person's name goes on the board along with a sticker, symbolizing the number of credits earned. The program has quickly become a part of Chippawa's culture. "All of the conversations are about what people are learning and how they're growing. And that kind of conversation breaks people open and lets the Spirit move," said Moody.

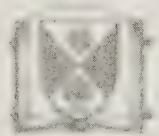
Although the Discipleship Project is only a year old, efforts have already paid off. Two-thirds of the 120 adults at Chippawa have become involved. The congregation earned 525 credits — surpassing its goal of 500. The key to its success is that participants can visibly measure their progress. "It's awakening people's faith," said Schonberg. "We're

just seeing a seed sprout, but I don't know what kind of plant it is yet."

With the program already giving evidence of spiritual growth, future goals involve sharing the Discipleship Project with other congregations, and the creators are already acting as consultants. Although their half- and full-day workshops come at a price, implementing the project is free — congregations simply download the needed materials from the website.

For a denomination that is losing members at an alarming rate, encouraging members to become active in their faith is a useful strategy in maintaining those members and attracting new ones. "When we're learning and growing in our faith, God is able to use us," said Schonberg. "When God works, things happen." ■

To find out more about these resources, visit their websites at:
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Our home and native land

The Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan

by Amy Cameron

A lush green forest filled with pine, spruce and poplar lined the northern bank of the river. On the south side, the open plain — long grass swaying in the summer breeze — stretched out before the eye. It was July 26, 1866. Rev. James Nisbet stood on the edge of the North Saskatchewan River and surveyed the land. He'd picked well; the location was excellent. Now the hard work of building his mission would begin.

The year before, Nisbet was appointed the first Presbyterian missionary to the Indians. With his wife and small daughter in tow, Nisbet moved to the beautiful tract of land he'd chosen primarily for its ideal access to native bands. It was also 80 kilometres away from the nearest Protestant mission. Helping to build the mission were two young men and Nisbet's brother-in-law, John McKay, who was known not only for his skill in hunting buffalo but his fluency in Cree.

The mission started small: two log structures to serve as homes. Then they added a school (with the help of McKay, Nisbet designed a Cree primer to be used in teaching the native children), a barn, two byres and a stable. They built a stockade to keep wild dogs out and a garden to feed not only themselves but to help the natives who struggled during long and cold winters. Twice every Sunday church services were held, a halting sermon delivered in English and translated, sentence by sentence, into Cree. In order to maintain good relations with the Indians (who had been stung by less scrupulous white men), Nisbet announced that no trading whatsoever would occur between the mission and the natives.

In these small and painstaking ways, Nisbet laid the foundations of a city. On July 1, 1883, by the authority of the Presbytery of Brandon, Prince Albert, Sask., became a congregation.

Today, the site first worked by four men, two women and a child has grown to include over 34,000 people. The third largest city in the province, Prince Albert is also home to the oldest church in the presbytery, St. Paul's, built in 1906. Hanging on one side of the beautiful stained glass windows in the sanctuary is an oil painting of Lucy Baker, the first female Canadian missionary to the Indians who ran a school for native children. On the other side is a portrait of Nisbet.

Clearly, Presbyterian roots run deep in this area. Not only among the descendants of Scottish farmers and Hudson Bay traders that make up the majority of what

is now known as the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan, but also with local native bands. In 1866, while still plotting land for homes, Nisbet met Great Cree Chief Mistawasis of the Northern Plains Cree. During a smallpox outbreak, Nisbet — using two scabs he'd acquired — immunized, albeit in a crude fashion, not only the people of Prince Albert but the natives. Mistawasis was so impressed by Nisbet, the mission and its positive impact on his people that he requested a resident missionary from the Presbyterian Church for his reserve. He insisted that John McKay be appointed to the post. In 1878, McKay was ordained and moved to the reserve southwest of Prince Albert. (Seven years later, Mistawasis — a staunch Presbyterian — and his band would come to the aid of Nisbet's mission to protect them during the second Riel Rebellion.) Mistawasis died in 1903 but the small, white Mistawasis Memorial Church remains, ministering to its



Left: Rev. James Nisbet. Below: In 1932, the original church and school building from James Nisbet's mission was moved from its downtown location in Prince Albert to its present spot in Kinsmen Park.



members from its position on the highest hill of the reserve.

The Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan was formed in September 1968 with the amalgamation of the Prince Albert and Saskatoon presbyteries, both of which suffered from dwindling numbers. Under the current jurisdiction, there are 12 churches, two preaching points, one mission and a shared ministry with the United, Anglican and Lutheran denominations in the resort town of Candle Lake, Sask.

Like so many churches across the country, the biggest hurdle for this area is overcoming diminishing congregations. The numbers are bleak. Five pastoral charges in the Northern Saskatchewan presbytery are seeking ministry, from the two-point charge of St. James, Melfort, and St. Andrew's, Tisdale, in the east, to North Battleford in the west. (When available, the minister in North Battleford also attends to the needs of St. Philip's in Sandwith.) Even the historic St. Paul's, Prince Albert, is without leadership.

While the Presbyterian churches in Saskatoon still need one minister (to pro-

vide for the two-point charge of Calvin Goforth and McKercher Drive churches), the congregations in this city have learned to draw on their unique strengths to carry them forward. Parkview, the oldest congregation in the city, is known for its choir and ministry of music. The members of McKercher Drive are a tightly knit group,

Clearly, Presbyterian roots run deep in this area

describing themselves a "family" and St. Andrew's, located downtown, was established in 1925 by Presbyterians who did not wish to follow their own congregation's move into union. Calvin Goforth, the result of an amalgamation of Jonathan Goforth and Calvin churches more than 20 years ago, is mission minded and heavily involved in Presbyterians Sharing and Presbyterian World Service and Development. In contrast to its sister churches, the congregation at Calvin Goforth is growing steadily with its summer out-

reach to children and ministry to seniors.

The newest building in the presbytery, Circle West, is also located in Saskatoon. Despite obvious handicaps — a smaller congregation and no minister — Circle West continues the long tradition of Presbyterians working with natives. Providing space for the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry served by Rev. Stewart Folster (the only native minister currently working in the Presbyterian Church), the church helps Folster's mission reach out to the native population in the city with weekly worship blending bits and pieces from both cultures.

It is this mingling of Presbyterian values and native tradition that has set this presbytery apart for over 135 years. From the venerable St. Paul's to the tiny building of St. Philip's in Sandwith, which just manages to squeeze in the three families that make up the congregation, this presbytery has a proud past. And as long as the Word of God is shared in churches like Mistawasis or from an open classroom in the Native Circle Ministry, the Presbytery of Northern Saskatchewan will continue to make history. **R**

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I'll lead you all in the dance, said he

by Michael Munnik

*How does a French Canadian girl
become world champion
Highland dancer?
Practice, practice, practice*



The list of competitors at last summer's Highland dance world championships in Dunoon, Scotland, would make a Presbyterian woman cluck her tongue. Macleans and Sutcliffes, Kelseys and Annes. Poor dears — they were surely predestined to become Highland dancers.

But one name stands out, and not only because of its conspicuous position at the top of the rankings. Marielle Lesperance hardly sounds like the name for the world's top Highland dancer. But the 15-year-old girl from Ottawa now holds the title, and her father, Jean, is proud, even though he recognizes the irony.

"I have people kidding me that I should change my name to McLesperance," he says. "I'm a French Canadian by birth, as pure as they get, and here I am in Highland dancing."

In fact, all three of Jean's daughters have donned their kilts and danced around the swords. But Marielle, the

'She was a girl on a mission. Now she's the one to beat'

youngest, is the first in the family and one of only a few in Canada to achieve the title of world champion.

"I kind of had that goal," says Marielle, "but I never expected to reach it." Certainly not after the first time she danced in the competition two years ago — she didn't even place in the top six. "It was pretty intimidating seeing everyone, because everyone there is so good [and] the competition is so close."

Marielle's teacher, Ellen Cameron Maloney, says that experience gave her pupil the motivation to become the champion. "She returned from Scotland, and she was a girl on a mission. There was no looking back; it was push, push, push the whole year." The mission now, Ellen says with a laugh, "is to stay there. It was a lot of work to get there, but everybody wants to be there, so now she's the one to beat."

Marielle continues to practise almost every day and travels to Cornwall twice a week for lessons at Ellen's studio. She keeps her focus on defending the title at the next Cowal Highland Gathering in Dunoon. (On August 28, Marielle became the first runner-up in Cowal's World Juvenile Championship.) And, of course, there's homework, sleeping, school and, just maybe, spending some time with her friends. Marielle says she

can usually make it all fit. "Sometimes I don't get my work in on time or stuff like that, but it works out."

Marielle's talent is apparent to anyone watching her. She jumps and kicks with the lightness and delicacy of a butterfly, but she's strong and, apparently, resilient. I first saw her dance on the concrete floor of the hall at Knox Church, Ottawa, for a Robbie Burns supper. I cringed at the thought of sore ankles, but she just laughs. "Dancing on concrete isn't the best," she concedes. "It hurts after a while." But she says she's happy to share her gifts with her church community.

The church shares its gifts with her, too. The congregation supported the Lesperance family after Marielle's mother died of cancer four years ago. "I had a lot of help," says Jean. "And the Highland dancing provided a basis and a focal point to help us get through a tough point and continue on with our lives. I know my late wife would have loved so much to watch Marielle win the [world championships] — and that was one of my thoughts I had while I was watching her. We figured she was watching from on high. So that was a comforting thought at that time."

Marielle drew close to her friends in dancing during that period. Her teacher says those relationships have thrived, not weakened, since her victory last summer. "She has to be the most humble champ I have ever met. She never talks about [her victory]; she shies away from it.... And with the kids, she's so encouraging. There's no bragging going on. She just takes it as, 'That was a really good competition, but now I have to keep going and move on.' You couldn't ask for a more well-rounded champ."

Not only does she have the physical prowess and the determination to succeed, says Ellen, but she also makes a great leader. "One young dancer wrote in a classroom essay that Marielle was the most inspiring person in her life." Having a champion in the studio "certainly gives them someone to look up to and admire," Ellen says.

With all the good things people say about her, you might think the praise would go to her head. But Marielle is likely her own biggest critic, and winning the world championships hasn't



changed that. "I think you just need to keep improving," she says. "There are always things you can improve. People say 'You're a world champion, what do you need to improve on?' But you always need to practise. There's always something you can make better."

Her father sees that driven side of her. He also knows that success in the rankings isn't as important to Marielle as dancing well. "She just loves doing it all," Jean says. "She loves the competition and the choreography. [Winning the world championships again is] not really that important. If she wins, that'll be great; if not, I don't think there's going to be too many tears shed." ■

Michael Munnik, an Ottawa writer, works as a producer and reporter for CBC Radio. He is a member of St. Andrew's, Nanaimo, B.C., but attends Knox Church in Ottawa.



If you want to know God, read his book — the whole of it

*Many Christians feed on the Bible like sparrows,
which leads to an emaciated faith*

by David Webber

Since the beginnings of the Christian faith, God's revelation has been tied directly to the Bible. If you want to know God, either theologically or relationally, the Christian perspective is that you do this by the word of God, the Bible. God speaks to us through the Bible.

God's people and God's book

The early church Fathers understood the Bible this way. Justin Martyr (d.165AD) regarded the Gospels as the "Voice of God." In *Apology*, he wrote: "We must not suppose that the language proceeds from men who were inspired, but from the Divine Word which moves them."

Irenaeus (c.130-202) was an influential figure in the development of Christian doctrine, and his role makes him key in understanding how Scripture was regarded in the early church. In *Against Heresies*, he wrote about the authority of the New Testament: "For the Lord of all gave the power of the Gospel to his apostles, through whom we have come to know the truth, that is, the teaching of the Son of God ... This Gospel they first preached. Afterwards, by the will of God, they handed it down to us in the Scriptures, to be 'the pillar and ground' of our faith."

It was not only the New Testament that was understood to be the revelation of God, but the Hebrew Scriptures first

and foremost. When the New Testament refers to "the scriptures," it is pointing to the Hebrew Scriptures because the New Testament did not yet exist. The Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures) is not called old because it is out of date but because it predates and anticipates the New Testament. One of the early church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215), said of the Old and New Testaments in *Stromata*: "There is no discord between the Law and the Gospel, but harmony, for they both proceed from the

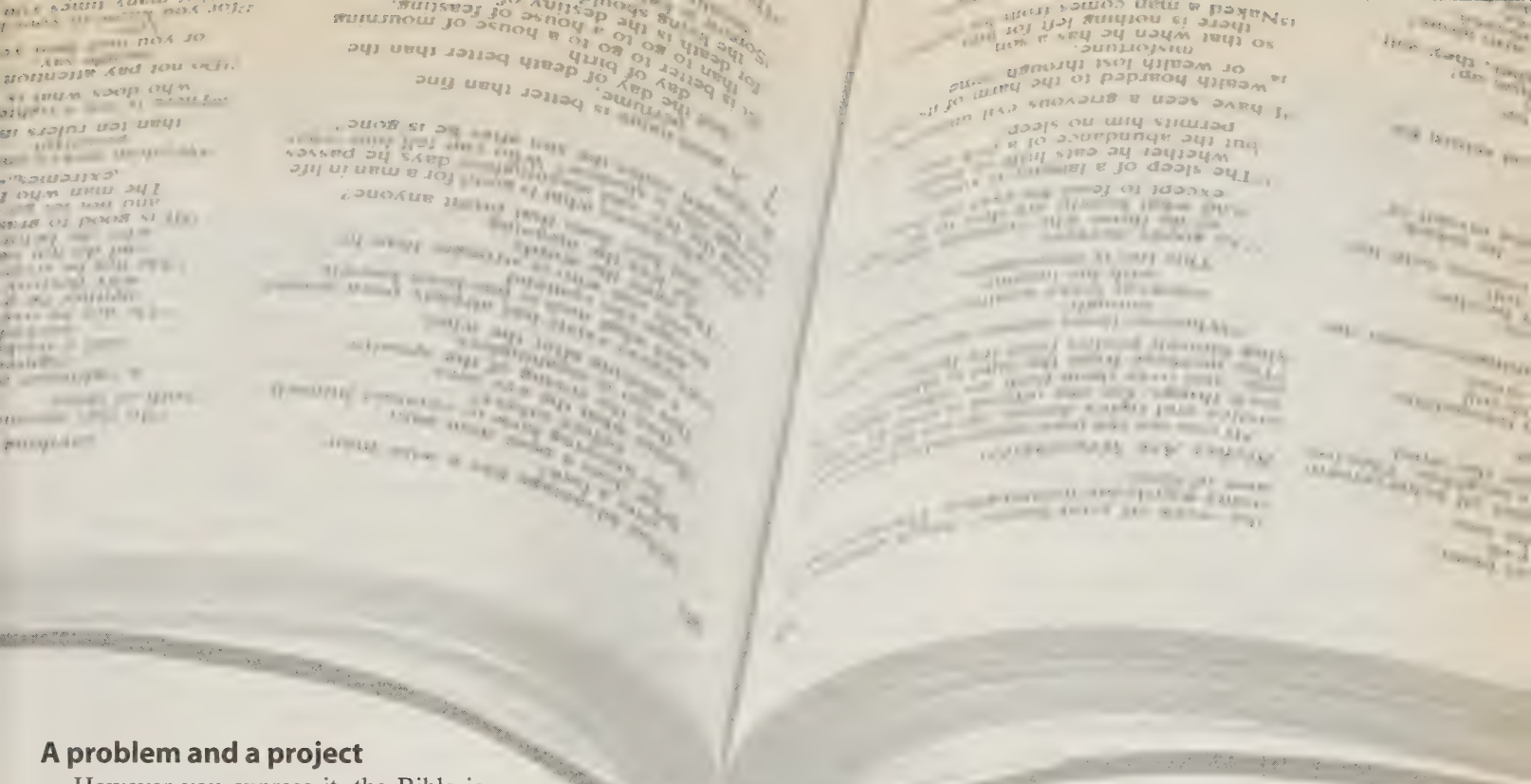
'The soul can do without all things except the Word of God'

same Author ... differing in name and time to suit the age and culture of their hearers ... since faith in Christ and the knowledge of the Gospel is the explanation and the fulfillment of the Law."

The Reformers picked up the early church Fathers' emphasis on the Bible (both testaments). John Wycliffe's (c.1320-1384) life's work was directed toward the translation and distribution of the Scriptures, which he believed to be the very word of God. He believed the Bible alone in the hands of the people would be adequate for the Holy Spirit to use among them. He advocated the Scriptures as the only law of the church.

The Protestant Reformation was built on the foundation of the centrality of the Bible. The battle cry of the Reformation was *Sola Scriptura* (the Scriptures alone), and it meant the freedom of Scripture to rule alone as God's word in the church. Martin Luther (1483-1546) spoke of the supreme importance of the word in *Table Talk*: "The Word comes first, and with the Word the Spirit breathes upon my heart so that I believe." In *Three Treatises*, he also noted: "Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there, there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate."

In the Presbyterian tradition, with roots back to the Reformation in Geneva and Scotland, the doctrinal centrality of the Bible is expressed this way in the Book of Forms: "The Presbyterian Church in Canada is bound only to Jesus Christ, the Church's King and Head. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God, testifying to Christ the living Word, are the canon of all doctrine, by which Christ rules our faith and life."



A problem and a project

However you express it, the Bible is foundational for faith and knowing God. And never before has the Bible been so available to people. In my library, I have more than 15 English translations. Geisler and Nix list over 430 translations of the Bible or significant parts of it into English between 1900 and 1986.¹ The Bible is also abundantly available on audiotape, videotape and computer. Yet I believe the most critical crisis in the church today is biblical illiteracy. Many Christians hear or read bits and pieces of the Bible but seldom read much of it, let alone the whole of it. They feed on the Bible like sparrows and, as a result, their faith in God and knowing of God is emaciated. Without the nourishment of the word of God, Christians of the 21st century appear to have become spiritually anorexic.

So last October, our Cariboo house churches in British Columbia began a new project we called *Birthing From the Bible — Reading Through the Bible in Nine Months*. It took the average reader only 15 or 20 minutes to read about four chapters each day. In nine months, we read Genesis through Revelation. Participants each selected their “working Bible” (a different version if they had read through the Bible before). They began each daily reading with a short prayer for God to help them and each person in their house church involved in the project. All received a reading plan

listing what to read each day and checked off the daily passage as they read it (the reading plan was easily designed with Logos Bible Software). If they missed reading one day, they could make it up the next. If they missed too much to catch up easily, they were encouraged to begin again at the place where they should be on the schedule. The emphasis was: “Do not give up! God wants you to do this! Other members of your congregation are praying for you to succeed.” As participants made their way through the Bible, they highlighted one verse per chapter that was special for them. Some were reluctant at first to mark up their Bibles, but the highlighted passages became like gold when they were finished. They ended each reading session with prayer, thanking God for his word for the day.

Parallel with this reading project was another project: *Preaching Through the Bible in Nine Months*. Each week, I focused on a passage from the past week’s reading assignment. I tried to land on many highlights in the Scriptures over the nine-month period, providing much hermeneutical fuel for our house church discussions. We proceeded with our Bible reading/preaching project expecting what the apostle Paul promised: “For

whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Project postlude

On June 30th this year, we ended the most significant event of my 21 years in ministry. I cannot recommend this initiative strongly enough for the Year of Education. Having virtually everyone in a congregation reading through the Bible at once and preaching each week on texts as everyone reads through them is a powerful spiritual experience. And most of the people in the house churches I pastor (about 70 people, ages 12 to 90) completed the program. Most used the printed word, but three people used audio-cassettes.

The project provided some interesting preaching challenges for me, like how to preach Christmas and Easter sermons from the Hebrew Scriptures. Christmas found us reading 1 Kings, so I preached the Christmas sermon on Solomon’s prayer of dedication before the temple (1 Kings 8:22-30). I used some words from Solomon’s prayer for my title: “But will God indeed dwell on the Earth?” Easter was just as rich as we were in the Minor Prophets. I picked up on Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15, where he says

Resources

The Holy Bible

A Bible reading plan such as *Through the Bible in a Year* (Canadian Bible Society pamphlet) or any Series X package from Logos Bible Software (www.logos.com/)

Christ died and rose on the third day according to the Hebrew Scripture. In the sermon, Easter According to the (Hebrew) Scriptures, I focused on resurrection prophecies from the Minor Prophets.

Here is what some participants had to say:

"Reading through the Bible from the beginning through to the end has given me a whole overview of our God, not just bits of him from the Old Testament or a New Testament view of him." (Lesley, age 25)

"It was enlightening to have a sermon on our daily Bible readings each week and then be able to discuss it with other members. Some of the Old Testament was heavy going


but one has to remember the times and society it was written for and try to understand the real meaning of the text." (Mary, age 70)

"It was the first time that either of us have read the Bible all the way through. Both of us enjoyed the task and grew spiritually a great deal through the Scripture reading and the daily prayer time." (Gordon, age 57, and Marion, age 86)

"I enjoyed the nine-month Bible reading project. I found it very interesting and easy to do. It also gave me a better insight into God's whole personality." (Chelsea, age 13)

"The time frame for the project was very good; it kept me interested [and] it didn't drag on. With a very short time span, the Bible stayed fresh in my mind from beginning to end as I read it. I feel I gained a whole lot more Bible understanding with this reading/preaching project.

It was a very rewarding experience for me and I highly recommend it." (Jack, age 59)

"The Bible reading/preaching project was a very exciting challenge for me. I have read the Bible through every year for quite a number of years but it has never before been opened up to my understanding like it was this time! I found God speaking to me in some new way every day. I really fell in love with the Old Testament as I discovered it abounding in examples of God's grace." (Ginny, age 57) 

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister in the Cariboo house church ministry in British Columbia.

¹ A General Introduction to the Bible (Moody, 1996)

Check the Year of Education website at www.presbyterian.ca/flames/education for updates of ideas, resources and events.



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Is Christian comedy funny?

Columnist Andrew Faiz tries to find some good Christian humour

Christians do laugh in church. But is Christian humour different? What does it mean to be funny and faithful? I followed this shallow thought to the website called "Sheep Laughs: The Best in Christian Humour ... All Under One Hoof":

Men wake up as good-looking as they went to bed.

Women somehow deteriorate during the night.

That's part of a series of jokes about the differences between men and women. And though I don't find it particularly funny, nor do I understand its Christianity, I suppose I should accept Sheep Laugh's claim that "all of the jokes, humour, cartoons, etc., spring from the Christian faith and walk." There's another joke in there in which a man first shoots his faithful dog and, as the joke ends, is about to shoot his nagging wife. (*Ha ha*)

Perhaps I chose the wrong "Christian" comedy. You Gotta Laff tells us: "Christian comedy is not easy to do. The material must not only be funny, but in good taste, with a clear spiritual message." That can only be a reference to the skit called *Scriptural Smackdown* in which two wrestlers, Downhome Dunker (*cheers and whistles*) and Sophisticated Sprinkler (*boos and hisses*), fight it out for "the entertainment of the world!"

Again, I don't understand the Christianity of the comedy, but that's what the title says and it must be so! Maybe I'm looking at the wrong place again. Crossroads Comedy is where "God works in funny ways." Crossroads Comedy is really Scott Gregory, who "uses stand-up comedy to prepare the way for presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ, personal testimony and biblical truths." Scott was inspired by Jeremiah 31:21 to become a

comedic preacher. Here's an example of his wit:

What is the world coming to? Kerry thinks he can beat Bush. That's evidence of mad cow disease. Kerry refers to himself as an underdog. Dogs are gathering in Washington, D.C., to protest.

He finishes that rant with the declaration that "stories that involve liberals and brainless ideas are believable." There you go. But in good Christian spirit, I shall give Mr. Gregory one more chance:

Like so much else that passes for Christianity in our culture, this stuff is bitter and twisted

I have a theory as to why male performers constantly reach down and grab themselves. I believe they forget their own gender and have to do repeated anatomy checks! These guys get out there on stage and suddenly realize their appearance and actions question their masculinity. (*Ha ha...I guess.*)

Christianity Depot has a long list of jokes, some actually worth a chuckle:

- Three proofs that Jesus was Jewish:
1. He went into his father's business.
 2. He lived at home until the age of 33.
 3. He was sure his mother was a virgin, and his mother was sure he was God.

Q: How many Presbyterians does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: Well, it should require about five committees to review the idea first.

A minister was forced by a traffic cop to pull over for speeding. As

the cop was about to write the ticket, the minister said to him, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The cop handed the minister the ticket and said, "Go thou and sin no more."

That's cute stuff.

ChristianComedy.Net is all about Danny Murphy who has written *Humor 101*, *Chicken Nuggets for the Soul* and *The Power of Negative Thinking* — all very funny books, I'm sure, although I've never got around to reading any of them. "Laughter is good like a medicine," Murphy writes on the website. "For a healthier life, book a Christian humorist for your next event." But Danny also has a serious side and he shares that on this website. I was gripped by his poem dedicated to the passengers of Flight 93, doomed on 9/11/2001. Gripped until I hit the third line:

The beasts of Allah barked and they bit,
But the heroes on flight ninety-three would not sit.

The comedians and Christian comedy sites noted here, and the dozens others available on the Internet, are testimony to successful niche marketing. They are proud to be "clean" comedians, but I find them disgusting. Racist, sexist, mean-spirited and petty — all in the name of Christ and to spread His word. Like so much else that passes for Christianity in our culture, this stuff is bitter and twisted. But, then, as the old saying goes, comedy isn't pretty. And, I suppose, neither is Christianity. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

Caring for others as Jesus taught

This was the way it was supposed to be

They had trained so very hard for the event. These Olympics were special, so very special. There were those who mocked the disabled competitors as not really being athletes, but that was because such critics did not understand. George in particular had worked every day at his event, the 100-metre sprint. Pouring rain or intense heat, he was at the track every morning.

Not always easy for a young man with Down's syndrome. Any parent of a challenged child, and most challenged men and women, will tell you it's not so much the disability that causes the problems but the people who discriminate against them for having it.

When he was stared at or laughed at, George responded with smiles. Not because he thought this was how he was supposed to behave, but because it was his nature. He could do nothing else. Such a response confused and worried some, but disarmed and charmed most.

The news that he had been selected to run in the games caused George to, quite literally, jump up and down. His parents had seen this many times before. Birthdays, Christmas, someone else in the house receiving good news. Odd, really, that he should be thought of as handicapped when his joy at his and other people's pleasure was so pure, so deep and so genuine.

After what seemed like an endless wait, the day of the event arrived. George was awake at dawn and made sure, to their qualified delight, his mum and dad were out of bed as well. He had washed himself so clean he almost seemed to shine. The journey by car to the arena was peppered with questions about crowds, running, times and, most poignant of all, whether Grandma would be watching.

Grandma had died some years earlier. Hey, George knew this. He merely inquired, eminently reasonably, whether she would be looking down from Heaven to see her favourite grandson run. He was told she would be. And she would.

A few last words of advice, and then out to the starting line. Eight athletes, with George in the middle. Instructions from the starter, and then the lightning blast of the gun. Off they sprang, with George as rapid as any of them. It was as if he could feel the wind lifting him from

and love so loud that people in neighbouring houses came out to see what had happened. As they crossed the line, the runners cheered and George began to jump again, dancing at the beauty and the grace of the moment.

His parents cried and held one another tight. The organizers hurriedly got hold of seven extra gold medals. Other athletes ran to the eight heroes and patted them on their backs so hard it hurt. Grandma merely smiled along the golden rays of the sun's warm embrace.

When he was laughed at, George responded with smiles.

Not because he thought this was how he was supposed to behave, but because it was his nature. He could do nothing else

the ground. But then disaster. His legs seemed to become tangled and, before he knew what was happening, he had fallen. He screamed.

It only took a moment for the other seven runners to leave him yards behind, but George's scream was so loud they and the crowd all heard. The runners turned their heads. Then, gradually, all of them stopped running. Instead of continuing on to victory, they all turned around and walked back to where their fellow athlete had fallen.

George was crying now and holding his cut knees close to his chest. The runners knelt down, cuddled him, wiped away the grit and blood from his legs, and picked him up. They put their arms round him, telling him it would be OK. Then they linked arms, all eight, and walked forward. Together in a line, as one person, they crossed the finish line.

The crowd was silent. Then sobs could be heard. Then a roar of approval

This was community, this was goodness, this was the way it was supposed to be.

It was also an example of the contract, the relationship, between people that Jesus Christ preached and believed. An interdependence of love. A caring for others. An assumption of the collective spirit rather than a boasting of individual achievement.

As for George, he couldn't stop talking about how hard the ground had been when he fell over. "Did you see me fall, Mum? Did you see me fall?"

Yes, his mum said. But more important, she had seen him get up again. She had seen humanity reach for the stars. A humanity created by God to love and be loved. **R**

Michael Coren is a broadcaster, author and speaker. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com. You can join Michael in January 2005 on a tour of biblical Israel. Call 416-923-2003 or 1-800-262-6818, Ext. 9204.

Open your doors and they will come

Four churches and a school work together to introduce the gospel to children

by Tom Dickey

It is a weekday in a small Canadian town and more than 200 elementary students are gathered at a local church for a worship service. Hard to imagine, isn't it. Have the poor innocents been lured there like unsuspecting tourists to a time-sharing promotion, enticed by the promise of free pizza or tickets to a Harry Potter movie? Are they being forced to attend as part of the school curriculum? ("It's either church or introductory algebra, kids.")

Well, in Alvinston, Ont., you *can* imagine it happening, twice a year in fact, *and* the children are there of their own free will (or, perhaps occasionally, with some gentle parental persuasion). It began in 1996, when 70 students attended an Ash Wednesday service at St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church, and grew from there. Naturally, it didn't grow without help, in this case the co-operative planning of four churches — Alvinston Baptist, Guthrie Presbyterian, St. Matthew's and Hope United — and one teacher, Yvonne Koncovy.

The churches began by taking turns to hold the services but switched to Guthrie as the number of students attending increased. The emphasis of the two services rotates between four themes: Advent, All Saints' Day, Ash Wednesday and Holy Week. Traditions from each of the four denominations are incorporated to present the gospel in a simple way that is easily understood by children, using drama (featuring students as the actors), singing and prayer, with requests coming from the children ahead of time.

The youthful congregation, ranging in age from junior kindergarten to Grade 8, is transported to the services in donated buses, and the churches pay for the drivers. In what must be (let's hope) a refreshingly easy decision for many par-

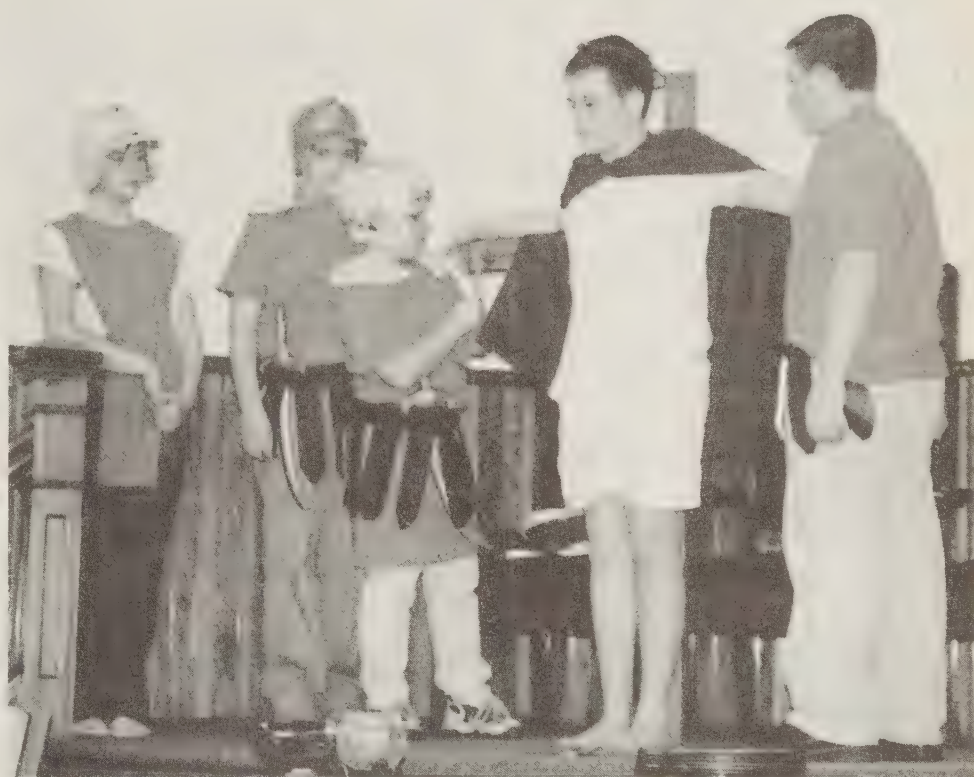


Photo by Ruth Leitch

Traditions from all four denominations are used in drama, singing and prayer.

ents and guardians, permission must be granted for children to attend. The school principal and some of the teachers frequently join with the students for the service. There are also volunteers from the churches to help with supervision.

'We hope we've planted a seed and God will make it grow'

Rev. Jo-Anne Symington, minister of Guthrie Church and St. Andrew's, Napier, for the past two years, says it is astonishing to see so many children attending church in a community of less than 3,000 people. She also believes the school they come from, Brooke Central, is highly unusual. A French immersion school, Brooke Central is attended by

both Roman Catholic and Protestant students. Roman Catholic religious instruction is available to any student who wants it, regardless of religious tradition. Between the school and the churches, something must be rubbing off. When 200-230 students attend a church service, that is half the school's total enrolment.

"We hope that somewhere along the line we have planted a seed and God will make it grow," says Ms. Symington. "It is a wonderful thing to witness and an even more wonderful thing to be part of — to see so many children file through the doors of a church and participate in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is amazing that this happens, and it happens because of a small town with four churches and an elementary school that cares." ■

Based on a report by Rev. Jo-Anne Symington.

Honker Hemming

A white-headed buzzard could only watch the goslings hungrily

by David Webber

I saw them this morning, all lined up in disciplined military-like formation doing a final flypast at deck level. I witnessed this with a mixture of excitement, pride and regret filling my heart, like a father watching his sons fly past to war. The music they made as they flew stirred my heart; it always does, like bagpipes.

"Thank God they're going!" said Linda from the deck as she watched and heard the finale. "Thanks, too, that I won't have to follow them around with a shovel anymore, at least not for another five months. And that awful noise, it's good to have it gone. It's worse than bagpipes."

Linda and I have never been able to

agree on Canada geese or bagpipes. For her, the broods of geese that are successfully raised each year on Lac La Hache are only a nuisance, a loud mess waiting to turn our lakeside lawn into a barnyard. To me (and I expect to our Labrador retriever, Bud, who also looks up fondly as they fly past), the geese are the heart of the land I love, an emblem of the wilderness, true, strong and free. Their presence and music stir me deep within, move me spiritually. Like last spring.

I had reached another of those "bottom out of the bucket" moments in my life. So we dragged our tiny travel trailer to Green Lake to see if I could find something to plug it with. I brought my laptop

computer so I could write myself out of the state I was in, which is my usual way of bucket patching. After a suicidal breakfast of bacon and eggs (which I love, mostly because my doctor doesn't), I moved our 4x4 to a lonely spot overlooking the lake, to use as my makeshift office. The view went on forever to the west — over emerald green water, over rolling grassy hills, over dark green pine-covered uplands, finally ending when the snow-covered Coast Mountains kissed the horizon at least a hundred miles away.

The aspens, which always seem to sit with me when I need healing, had not yet broken a bud though it was almost the 24th of May. I listened to the truck radio



for a while. News had just broken in Alberta's Peace River country to the north that mad cow disease had been discovered in Canada for the first time. Now we were just another affluent country driven ill by a twisted consumerism that dictated feeding meat by-products to cows to improve their efficiency as protein converters in a never-ending battle to reduce the price of food. I thought of the more than 1,100 beef ranchers with whom I share the Cariboo-Chilcotin area, the soon to be falling beef prices and the failing family ranches that would result. I quickly switched the radio off in disgust. I sat in silence for about 39 seconds and, then, God whispered in my ear.

It never takes long when I sit alone in the bush — God whispering into my ear

'Your understanding of God's grace is too skinny, preacher'


that is. This time it was a new family of Canada geese. Mom swam ahead very slowly, followed by a line of 10 tiny and tawny goslings, barely able to keep up and yet bursting at the seams to break out. Behind this brood of would-be delinquents swam dad. Both parents rhythmically goosed out their necks in threatening fashion, almost keeping time with each other. They had their bustling brood disciplined like a platoon of little downy marines. A white-headed buzzard watched hungrily from the pine lounge on the other side of Emerald Bay. Experience had taught the bald eagle that baby goose was not on his menu, not when the flock was hemmed in behind and before with parents like these. And sitting there, I was taught Psalm 139.

The Psalmist says to God, "You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me" (Psalm 139:5).¹ As I flipped open my Bible and looked at these words, I never really noticed it before, but they did not form a very liberating phrase. I checked my Hebrew dictionary and found the word used for "hem" means "to lay siege, besiege, i.e., encircle and enclose a fortified area as an aggressive military strategy to defeat a city or nation." I flipped to *Young's Literal Translation* of the Bible and read verse 5: "Behind and

before Thou hast besieged me, and Thou dost place on me Thy hand."

I looked at the geese and realized the little band of delinquents really were besieged, surrounded with a very active parental discipline. I realized that the parent geese were laying siege on the wayward tendencies of the goslings, who just couldn't wait to break out — but to break out was to become a bald eagle's repast. I looked from Psalm 139, to goose flock, to lounging bald buzzard hoping for his table to be set. Psalm 139 was not about what I thought it was about. Every grace-filled line was predicated upon the active and aggressive discipline of an all-knowing and ever-present God. And I have never accepted discipline very well.

I once shared a congregation with old Harry. Every time I preached a rousing sermon on the grace of God, he would stand up afterwards and say to the whole congregation, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6).² I would wince and later corner old Harry and give him another one of my grace lectures. He would just smile at me through teeth that were not there and patiently say, "Your understanding of God's grace is too skinny, preacher."

As I looked out at the very active and aggressive honker hemming going on under the eye of the eagle, I suddenly knew that old Harry was right. I thought I had heard the grace in Psalm 139 many times before, but never before had I known it as the active and aggressive discipline of a protective God. And never before had I been made to look at the holes in my bucket as, perhaps, the work of an omniscient Divine hand upon my life — something to hearken to rather than run from. Like the Psalmist, such knowledge was too amazing for me, more than I could fully understand (verse 6). And I looked again at the honker hemming and the eagle's eye, and I gave thanks to God for it all. 

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter's Aspen: Embracing the Creator's Fire*.

¹ The New Revised Standard Version

² The King James Version

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The Art of Seeing

by Harris Athanasiadis

Regarding the Holy: Tales from the Miry Clay by Andrew Fullerton
(Boarding Homes Ministry, 2003, \$10.)

*'My question was the attention I gave to them,
and their response was their beauty.'*

— St. Augustine

This is one of several amazing quotes found throughout a little book written by Rev. Dr. Andrew Fullerton. *Regarding the Holy* grew out of an idea by Rev. Rodger Hunter, director of the Boarding Homes Ministry in Toronto (see page 45). Dr. Fullerton was invited to join in as a witness and participant in the communities of faith formed and forming in these homes. Groups of volunteers are trained and commissioned to go into the boarding homes to worship and establish community with the residents. The experience was transformative for Dr. Fullerton, and the book is as much a reflection of his own journey as it is a description of the ministry itself and the residents with whom spiritual communities are formed.

The title of the book expresses its purpose. The word "regard" not only has the meaning often assigned it in English; namely, consideration, regard for or attention to others. It also has the meaning drawn from the French *regarder*, of seeing. Dr. Fullerton writes that the purpose he discovered in these faith-formed/forming communities is simply and purely this: seeing in a way that is transformative for both the one seeing and the one seen.

Whether in worshipping together, eating together or just being together, the process of seeing and being seen is both unsettling and liberating. People are

challenged to be more authentic and true — to shed their false skin like the layers of an onion. In the process of becoming uncovered and exposed, true communion is possible and people are opened to beauty and drawn by love in a manner that transforms both lover and beloved.

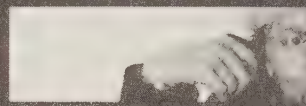
Regarding the Holy weaves together several strands. First, there is a description of many of the residents. Through-

Whether in worshipping together, eating together or just being together, the process of seeing and being seen is both unsettling and liberating

out the pages, their unique particularity as human beings emerges with sensitivity and grace. The anguish that is their lives and, also, the remarkable moments of grace, humour and compassion they are able to express speak to the awesome mystery of God's Spirit moving through people in whom many would not expect to find the Spirit.

Second, there is a description of the Boarding Homes Ministry itself, along with the volunteers who go into the homes and join with the residents in form-

Regarding The Holy
(Tales From The Miry Clay)



The Reverend Dr. Andrew Fullerton

A Journey Of Discovery
Building Christian Community
In Boarding Homes

For: Boarding Homes Ministry (Canada)

ing community. The compassion and dedication of these volunteers is remarkable, and the quality of the communion between residents and volunteers reflects the giving and receiving that goes both ways.

Finally, Dr. Fullerton writes personally throughout. He contributes both theological analysis and a reflection of his own difficult, yet redemptive journey toward seeing and being seen.

Dr. Fullerton reflects on the centrality of the cross and Christ impaled on it. In the crucified Christ, he finds the deepest truth about the human condition as well as the special bond between God and the afflicted. In taking a step of involvement and exposure into these communities and engaging the human beings who belong to them as spiritual interlocutors, the falseness and dishonesty of so much of life is purged. The person is challenged to simply be, without any particular goal or agenda.

While *Regarding the Holy* is a gift to the Boarding Homes Ministry and a tribute to the people found in these homes, it is also, quite clearly, a redemptive and transfiguring journey for the author. As the great Albert Schweitzer said, who also found his way to such a transfiguring redemption, one is challenged to live and think much more "elementally" about the truth of the human condition and the miracle of divine compassion arising through

death in awesome and surprising ways, and through the faces and lives of those whom our world discounts as surplus. Truly a sourcebook for personal meditation, I would recommend this book well beyond its invitational purpose for involvement in the Boarding Homes Ministry. It is a book for personal use as well as for preparation in pastoral care visiting and befriending in any faith community.

May the church find its salvation not in ever more strategies for church growth but in developing the art and discipline of paying attention to the afflicted and their

beauty in God's eyes. Then the church can become a witness to authentic humanity, both vulnerable and noble, wounded yet beautiful, tragic yet also the mediator of divine grace. When it is so tempting for a church in decline to seek to pattern its life upon the successful corporate model, the promise of a ministry like this in boarding homes and the invitation to form community on a very different basis and for a very different purpose can challenge the church to be conformed ever more fully to the "Christ crucified" whom it is called to proclaim. **R**

Rev. Harris Athanasiadis is the minister of St. Marks, Toronto.

To purchase *Regarding The Holy* (\$10) or *Developing Small Group Community Ministries* (\$5), which explores the nature of Christian community and details how churches can learn and link with their neighbourhoods, contact: Boarding Homes Ministry, Rev. Rodger Hunter, Chaplain, Stn. Q, Box 713, Toronto, ON M4T 2N5; 416-992-4987; bhmin@sympatico.ca.

The lost are now found, thanks to Boarding Homes Ministry

By Amy Sedlezky

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. (1 Corinthians 12:24-26 NRSV)

They are considered the least of society — those who are poor, sick or mentally unwell. They have no close friends, no family, no job. They have been cast aside. Alone. Forgotten.

But Rev. Rodger Hunter sees these lost souls, and his Boarding Homes Ministry is an opportunity for congregations to see them too. Mr. Hunter assists congregations in forming teams that work with boarding home residents and encourages them to commit to long-term relationships with these rejected and downtrodden people, most of whom are mentally ill. "I wanted to establish a ministry that would address the catastrophe going on there and the enforced isolation of these people," said Mr. Hunter. "We need to claim these people as central to the Christian community and not think they need to be fixed or remedied. We need to realize they are intensely valuable and indispensable to our spiritual lives."

Forging deep and meaningful connections with people in boarding homes

is the goal of Boarding Homes Ministry and the ministry of the church in general. "It should be a part of [a congregation's] general calling to be involved in their neighbourhoods. These homes are

'We need to claim these people as central to the Christian community and not think they need to be fixed or remedied'

Rev. Rodger Hunter

often right around the corner, yet people have no idea they're there," he said. "The church is called to move freely within its neighbourhood, building holy community."

Convincing parishioners to get out of the pews and into the streets isn't always easy. Some hear Mr. Hunter's words for the first time and immediately want to be involved. But others aren't stirred as

easily. "The challenge is how to communicate a value system outside of what normal church looks like. We need to encourage people to come out of the church building and claim the community in which they live."

Started nearly eight years ago in Toronto, Boarding Homes Ministry now works with 14 homes in Toronto, one in Newmarket, Ont., two in Windsor, Ont. and one in New Minas, Nova Scotia. Each home houses about 25 to 30 men and women. Some teams have been participating for five years now. Although it began in the Presbyterian Church (Mr. Hunter is a minister in association at St. Andrew's, King St., Toronto), the ministry recently welcomed its first United Church team.

Mr. Hunter and his staff recruit congregations to take part, train and prepare teams for their new roles, accompany them into homes for the first time, and visit the teams in the homes periodically throughout the year. They also do some pastoral work within the homes. Essentially, however, it is a lay ministry. Prospective team members should not feel as though they aren't cut out for such work. "People often feel inadequate to

The Unpicked Apples

Apples fall with no one to eat them,
fruit of their own labours
but children of gravity all,
too huge for squirrels, too ungenerous
with their favours for the bees that
scout red rind, not even light
to part tall grass and sip the buried goodness.

October has decided there'll be a harvest
whether men intercede or no.
Trees loosen the familial reins,
Apples, like the oldest child,
will be the first to leave.

Apples succumb to earth eventually,
the ancestor that will not refuse them.
What worms don't succour, minerals devour.
But deep in the mulch, the mud, the sediment,
Life's too wilful to break completely down.
Apples may go to seed but just
so seed can someday go to apples.

— John Grey

do this, but it's important that church members realize they have a calling and that we simply do ministry in our weakness and let God bring it to life," said Mr. Hunter. "They have nothing to fear about inadequacies."

The key to the ministry is recognizing the reversal of roles that is so common in God's kingdom — the poor become rich, the weak are made strong, the dishonoured are given high honour. "Out of them will rise wisdom and blessing," said Mr. Hunter of the boarding home residents. "As we form holy communion with them, their humanity is released to us. It is often an honest and raw humanity, along with the bravery and beauty of their lives. It is their weakness that allows God's wisdom to show through."

This theory is not one of academics or theological thought alone; rather, it is about close relationships between congregation members and boarding home residents. "You can put names and faces to the words," said Mr. Hunter. "And you build friendships."

Home visits, which normally occur weekly or biweekly for several hours, usually consist of a meal, conversation and a time of directed worship, including singing, prayer and reflection. The residents and home owner give their permission for the team to enter, and no residents are pressured to participate. Interestingly, salvation is not usually what residents need. "When we go into a house, normally what we find is that they are already Christians with a deep faith," said Mr. Hunter. "They often have prayer lives that I'm envious of! But they're reading Scripture, praying and reflecting on God all alone. No one is drawing on that. It's sad."

The work of Boarding Homes Ministry is both rewarding and difficult. "The residents are wonderfully funny and inspirational. We have parties and barbecues. There is a deep and spiritual joy that comes from these very hurting people, and it's wonderful to see that. But of course it's also a very painful ministry because these people are often so rejected and held in contempt," said Mr. Hunter. "Their great giftedness is bottled up because people aren't in communion with them. That's a great tragedy. Until we form some kind of rich union with them, it's all lost." ■

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Herridge, Arthur J. — Glenview suffered a great loss in the death of Art Herridge on May 24, 2004.

Art became a Glenview Elder in 1975 and served as Clerk of Session from 1986 to 1991. He was also a Glenview Trustee. Besides his meticulous work in all that he took on in this Congregation, he made a substantial contribution to The Presbyterian Church in Canada. He was a member, and later, Convener of the Administration Council. He was deeply involved in the restructuring of Boards and Committees of Assembly and was named the first Convener of the new Assembly Council. More recently he was Glenview's Representative Elder to the Presbytery of East Toronto. His wise counsel to these committees and to all the others on which he served set an example of integrity and vast experience not only with Church Governance, but with Christian ideals.

Forty Glenview Elders formed a Guard of Honour along the front walk of the Church following Art's Funeral Service on Friday, May 28.

Glenview misses Art as a colleague, mentor and friend. We mourn his loss with wife Doris, his sons Bruce, Douglas and Gordon and their families.

Lever, M. Alma (Bates), died June 4, 2004, in her 97th year. Alma was active in the First

Presbyterian Church in Port Colborne for over 82 years, and was its longest serving member when she died. She was a much-loved member of the Ladies' Aid and worked in the kitchen on Presbyterian dinners up until the last six months of her long life. She is survived by her son Allan & his wife, Nora (St Andrew's Toronto) and predeceased by both daughters, Eleanor Young and Anne Gebhardt.

Molloy, Barbara, passed away on May 14, 2004. Barbara was the widow of the Rev. Bruce Molloy. The Molloy family arrived at St. Andrew's, Victoria, in the 1960s, and Barbara became an important part of our congregation, remaining faithful to the end. Barbara is survived by children Kathy and Andrew and their families. A life well lived!

Ross, Ada, 81, a long-time member of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

Greenway, Ted, 59, died August 24, 2004, a member of First Presbyterian Church, Chatham, Ont.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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The life and ministry of

Chris Vais

Saturday, October 30, 2004

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

at Knox College

56 St. George St., Toronto.

Dr. Andrew Fullerton

will speak and lead a discussion on

"AND DELIVER US FROM ADMINISTRATION:

A PLEA FOR FRIENDSHIP IN THE LIFE

OF THE CHURCH"

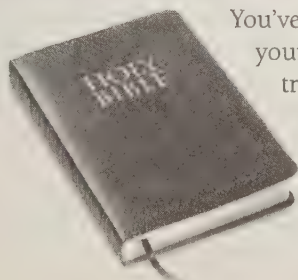
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Created by Jennifer O'Farrell,
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A traditional sign of welcome in tropical Pacific islands is the lei, a garland made from fragrant flowers. In Hawaii, leis express *aloha*, meaning both hello and goodbye. Leis are always given on special occasions to show joy and celebration.

Items needed: paper, one-hole punch, scissors, string (1 metre long), tape, plastic straws (cut into 3-centimetre lengths)

Instructions:

1. Trace the leaf patterns found on this page or make your own shapes.
2. Trace onto coloured paper and cut out lots of leaves. Divide them into two piles. Punch a hole in the centre of each leaf in one pile. Punch the hole at the side of each leaf in the other pile.
3. Loosely tie a large knot about 4 centimetres from one end of the string to serve as a stopper. Wrap the other end with a piece of tape. This tip will be the threader.
4. Guide the string through a prepared paper leaf, then through a piece of plastic straw. Move the items to touch each other gently. Thread the leaves and straws alternately (also alternating leaves from each pile) until only about 4 centimetres of string remain.
5. Undo the knot and tie both ends of the string together. Tuck the excess string into the items on either side of the knot.

CELEBRATE!

Place a lei on the shoulders of each guest and family member as they gather for Thanksgiving dinner.

At the Thanksgiving table, offer pencils for each person to draw a picture of (or write down) the things for which he or she would like to thank God. Every lei will be filled with gratitude and worn throughout the meal as a remembrance of hospitality and of God's generous blessings.

We're gonna sit at the welcome table.
We're gonna sit at the welcome table,
one of these days. Hallelujah!
We're gonna sit at the welcome table.
Gonna sit at the welcome table,
one of these days.

All kinds of people around
that table.
All kinds of people around
that table,
one of these days. Hallelujah!
All kinds of people around
that table.
Gonna sit at the welcome table,
one of these days.

No fancy style at the welcome table.
No fancy style at the welcome table,
one of these days. Hallelujah!
No fancy style at the welcome table.
Gonna sit at the welcome table,
one of these days.

Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table
(Traditional spiritual)

You will find more learning activities online at:
www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html

One flew over the teacher's desk

'Congratulations, Callaway, you've won first prize'

Just last week, we were sitting around the supper table and I asked the children, "So what did you learn today?"

"Nothing," they replied. Today they brought home their report cards, and we discovered they were not lying.

They say the world will never be a better place until children are an improvement on their parents, and I take comfort from this. You see, I was a problem child during my school days. In fact, if you were to check the records at Prairie Elementary School, you would discover I still hold the record for Most Whippings in a Week.

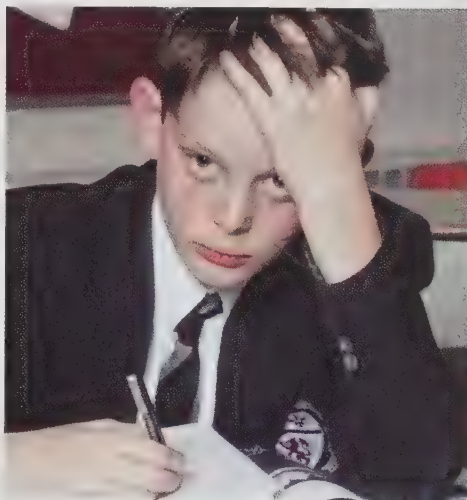
On my very first day of school, Leslie Kolibaba squealed on me for having my eyes open during prayer (yes, they prayed back then), and teachers viewed me with suspicion from that day onward. By Grade 3, teachers were already wondering if there was any hope for me. And by high school, they knew the answer. My marks had been slipping ever since kindergarten.

To complicate matters, there were some strange teachers roaming the classrooms. One prided himself on calling everyone by birthday. I was July 26. A friend of mine was May 3rd. "Hi, May 3rd," he'd say, walking past us in the hall. Or, "July 26, would you stand and read paragraph three from page 220."

Several years after high school, my friend and his new bride were walking around a mall a thousand miles from home when they happened to meet this former teacher. They stopped to talk with him. But all he said was, "Hi, May 3rd," then walked away. Needless to say, this dear man's elevator wasn't stopping at all the right floors. I can't remember a thing I learned from him, except I never forget my friend's birthday.

Thankfully we had other teachers too.

In Grade 10, I was standing at the



Those who influenced me the most didn't only point a finger, they held out a helping hand

drinking fountain swapping jokes with friends when my English teacher, Mr. Bienert, came along. Taking me aside, he told me some simple words that have changed my life. Later I discovered he'd been in the faculty lounge talking to some of the other teachers, all of whom were wondering if there was any hope for me.

"Listen, Callaway," said Mr. Bienert, "Your math marks aren't adding up. Your gift at science has yet to be discovered. Biology? Chemistry? Physics? Well, the experiment is not working."

I'd been told this before. This was not news to me. But what he said next was the best news I'd heard in a long time: "I want you in my communication arts class. I think God has given you a gift in the area of communication."

The very next day, I had no trouble getting out of bed. I even put on matching clothes. And after joining his class, I worked eagerly on my first assignment: writing a poem for a poetry contest. I can't remember a word I wrote, but I'll never forget Mr. Bienert standing at the

front of the classroom, pulling five bucks from his wallet and calling me forward. "Congratulations, Callaway. You've won first prize," he said, stuffing the bill into my eager hand. "I want you to read this in chapel tomorrow. It's good stuff."

The next day my knees knocked and my hands shook as I walked to the podium. But I read that poem loudly before the entire school. All because someone believed in me.


You know, I've been influenced by a whole lot of people over the years. Some have scolded me. Some have hollered at me. Some have spanked me. And most have forgotten my birthday. But those who influenced me the most were not the ones who pointed out all my faults, but those who knew that God was bigger than my shortcomings. Those who influenced me the most didn't only point a finger, they held out a helping hand.

None of us knows what God will do when we encourage someone, do we? I almost flunked French class in high school. Now they're translating my writings into languages like German, Polish, Spanish and English (one of these I speak fluently). I was born with a face for radio, but a new video series of mine is being distributed in thousands of churches around the world.

This is no tribute to me. It is a tribute to the goodness and greatness of God. And it's a tribute to those, like Mr. Bienert, who believed in God enough to believe he could do something with a crazy kid like me.

Next time you look at a child, think not of what they are but of what they could become — with a little encouragement from you. **R**

Phil is a speaker and the author of a new series of children's books. His website is www.philcallaway.com.



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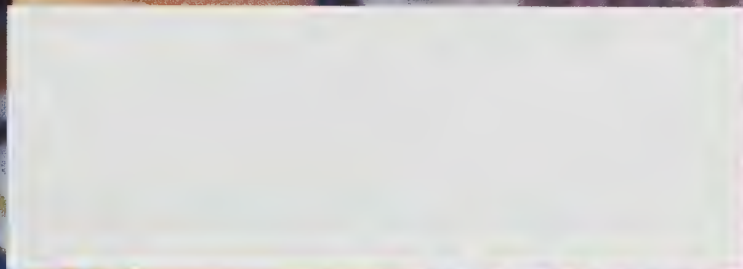
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PRESBYTERIAN Record

November 2004

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Fighting the Hidden Hunger





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The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Malawi, runs feeding programs for malnourished children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The food is enriched with micronutrients. Photo by Carl Hiebert, PWS&D.

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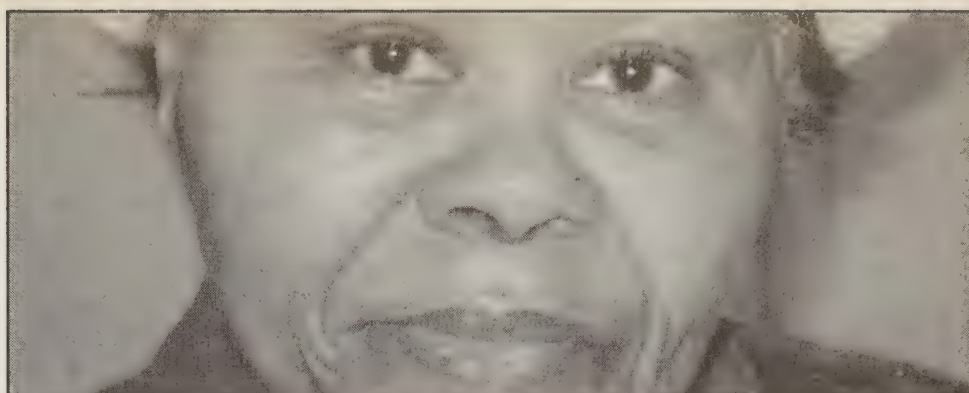
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How much is a child's smile worth?

You can't escape those eyes and the hint of a smile that bespeak of a deeper story. The little girl whose face graces this issue's cover is from northern Malawi. We don't know her name, but the majority of that region's inhabitants live off less than two dollars a day — the United Nations' current standard for extreme poverty. Famine, high unemployment and the devastation caused by HIV and AIDS are widespread. Fortunately, because of a program run by the Central Africa Presbyterian Church, a partner of the Canadian church, the grain here — like yours and mine — is enriched. This is not the case for millions of people around the globe.

Enriched flour is something we take for granted. The idea was developed in Britain during the war. Today, our flour must contain thiamine, riboflavin and niacin (vitamins B1, B2 and B3), as well as iron and folic acid. It may also contain several other vitamins and minerals.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank and other church aid partners have extensive programs that enrich food with the nutrients people need. Pregnant women and young children are usually the primary benefactors. Funding the work of the CFGB is one of the main focuses of Presbyterian World Service and Development. Last year, PWS&D — the church's outreach arm that operates in Canada and more than 15 other countries (depending on how many nations need emergency relief) — donated \$463,000 to the foodgrains bank.

Over the past 12 months, *Record* staff have had the privilege of travelling to parts of the world where PWS&D supports projects; places most Canadians don't have the opportunity of visiting. We've been to Ethiopia to report on the work of CFGB there. We've also been to the Middle East where KAIROS, another Canadian ecumenical group receiving PWS&D funding, supports Palestinian refugees, helps get child workers off the streets, promotes women's rights and supports several other crucial social services in the region. We've also been to Ghana where PWS&D helps residents develop small businesses and agricultural projects, as well as educate and support people with physical or mental disabilities and advocate for their rights.

There is misery in these places and the numbers are staggering. In Africa alone, 314 million people live on less than \$1 a day. That's almost twice as many as in 1981. Even given the relative cost of goods, there is nowhere in the world where that equates to anything but a life of extreme poverty. As a nation,

we contribute less than half what the United Nations recommends we should in international aid. We should be ashamed. Nature and history have provided us with immense riches. Too often we delude ourselves that it is the sweat of our brow that has built this wealth. Most people in the poorest countries are victims of circumstances beyond their control, and they work far harder than any of us do for a pittance.

For too long Canadians have been pretending that we are a force for good on the international scene. No doubt individual Canadians and church-sponsored organizations are doing noble work, but as a country we are sub-par.

Lately, there has been a lot of focus in the news on the state of our military. Canada should be involved in peacekeeping around the world. In order to do that, we need to properly equip the men and women who put their lives on the line for people who can't defend themselves.

But consider this. Canadians contribute about \$3 billion a year to foreign aid. That may sound like a lot. Yet we spend almost four times that on our military. Given that poverty and a lack of popularly available social services is at the heart of many conflicts, this is like buying cheap toothpaste with no brush but paying the dentist to fill our cavities. Internationally, the comparison is much worse. Last year, total international aid amounted to about \$75 billion compared with \$1.13 trillion in military expenditures.

There isn't any excuse. For Christians, our obligations are clear. Jesus himself set an example. He fed the crowds who were following him not just with spiritual food, but with carbohydrates and protein — bread and fish.

Christmas is around the corner. What are you going to buy for all those people on your list who already have everything they need? I'm betting they would be thrilled if you made a donation on their behalf to PWS&D. Not only would they get the charitable tax deduction but they'd also know the gift helped put a smile on the face of a child.

And how much is that worth?

David Harris

Standing behind Biblical principles

It is with interest that I read Rev. Jane Swatridge's comments regarding same-sex marriages ("East Toronto presbytery says no to temporary approval of same-sex marriages", June 2004). "Nobody wants to touch it. Nobody wants to be the first... Whatever it is we decide on, as long as we stand behind it, then what's wrong with that?" Why indeed? The Presbyterian Church already decided on this in 2002, as well in previous decisions, and reaffirmed this in 2004. They have "touched" it, wrestled with it, and keep coming up with the same Biblical answer. Don't people get it? The church is standing behind Biblical principles, which in today's everything-goes, post-modern world is certainly the courageous thing to do. Ms. Swatridge implies that the courageous and correct thing to decide would be otherwise. I fail to see any courage in following societal mores like lemmings, nor can one easily see the correctness of same-sex marriages from a Biblical stance. One could easier present a case for polygamous marriages from the Bible, but we don't see this being pushed in the church. Can a PCC pastor like Ms. Swatridge not simply follow clear rulings and voice their objections in appropriate forums such as General Assembly?

*Richard Schwarz
Pokhara, Nepal*

The 'hagiography' of Ted Johnson

I was amused by Hugh McCullum's hagiography of our 'Great Helmsman', the late Ted Johnson ("Remembering the nightmare of Biafra", September 2004). Ted was undoubtedly a man of energy and panache, but the article fails to make the case that he was "Canadian Presbyterianism's most distinguished church leader." Time and history have not been kind to Ted's political judgments, either in China or West Africa. It is certainly debatable whether the Jointchurchaid Biafran relief efforts saved lives or caused death by protracting an unwinnable rebellion. Part of leadership involves motivating people to do things; but it also requires getting them to do the right things.

There are many specific points that could be made about the article itself. But briefly, the chronology is skewed. In point of fact, Biafra's breakaway from Nigeria on May 30, 1967, was not "the beginning of a seemingly endless round of rebellion, bloody coups, military dictatorships, appalling corruption, and ethnic and religious strife." The story was already well advanced by then. A much more plausible starting point is the military coup — two years earlier — led by five Ibo officers.

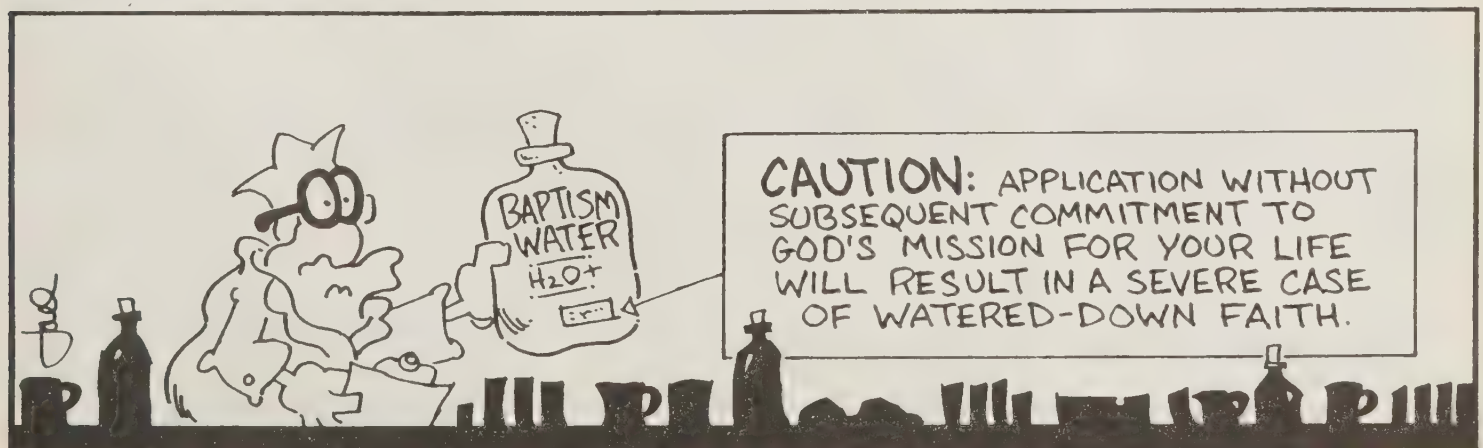
Moreover, Eastern Nigeria was no more ethnically or politically homogeneous than the rest of the country. It is just not the case that "in the Eastern Region, Ibos and smaller tribes lived together equitably and finally united

because of the war in 1966." Minority tribes in the East (like the Efiks in Calabar, or those in the oil rich Niger delta) were mostly Federalist in their politics and let the Federal troops into Biafra without resistance because they were worried about Ibo designs on their oil. A viable independent Biafra would have required an early recognition of minority rights — which was not forthcoming.

The charge of genocide — disseminated so successfully by Colonel Ojukwu's Directorate for Propaganda with its ubiquitous posters the "stick-thin children with the swollen bellies and sparse, rust-coloured hair" — was false. International inspectors, including Canadian military officials, said so at the time and the war's aftermath removed any possible doubt. Members in my former congregation in Ibadan remembered marching back along the highway to Lagos after the war to reclaim their jobs in the Nigerians Civil service (with back pay and pension benefits).

What other besieging army in the history of the world has worried about the best means of allowing food and medical supplies into an enclave they have surrounded? For all the swashbuckling tales of derring-do, the relief flights into Biafra were possible only because the Nigerian Federal authorities allowed them. They ceased as soon as the Biafran government started shooting down Nigerian planes and when the federal government concluded that church authorities would not

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use their leverage to move the Biafran government to political compromise.

Humanitarian and military considerations were hopelessly mixed in this conflict. Some Jointchurchaid monies were diverted to purchase arms; Red Cross planes were commandeered to move Biafran troops and supplies to the front. How likely is it that the cargo planes flying food relief were entirely clean of weapons? While one can understand how and why Ted Johnson and the PCC were recruited for the Biafran cause, that experience is a poor model for Christian mission in the modern world. In fact, I will go out on a limb and say that the conduct of the Nigerian forces, under Colonel Yabuku ("Jack") Gowan, both during and after the war, represents an impressive witness to the "civilized" white world of how a civil war can be fought with Christian restraint.

"In May of 1969," McCullum tells us, "Ted Johnson came back from another hair-raising flight into Biafra and reported that the war was no closer to a resolution despite his and others' many trips to Britain, France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy to try and mediate the increasingly vicious conflict." I'm afraid that Ted was using widow's mites from PCC congregations to play a game in which he was way out of his depth.

*Barry Mack
St. Lambert, Quebec*

After looking up hagiography in my Oxford — most journalists don't know how to spell the word — it seems Mr. Mack's problem is my sanctification of the former Moderator of your church. I knew Ted well enough to know he was no saint, but then who is? However, I am glad that Biafra and Johnson's life and work were amusing. Some humour.

Most of Mr. Mack's points are opinions which I find argumentative and long since disproved. In the opinion of many in the Presbyterian church and ecumenically, Johnson was a highly distinguished church leader, not only in Canadian Presbyterianism, but also ecumenically and internationally. He was regularly mentioned with such great helmspersons as

Archbishop Ted Scott, Moderator Lois Wilson and former World Council of Churches general secretary Eugene Carson Blake (also an ex-PCUSA stated clerk). Ted was a very loyal Presbyterian and committed ecumenist.

Perhaps it is a bit early to pass judgment historically. That takes time and, above all, objectivity. I fail to see how China with, at latest count, 80 million Christians, a China Christian Council made up of a single Protestant denomination and religious freedom is a failure on Ted Johnson's part. Jointchurchaid's mandate was humanitarian and has been a model for Christian emergency aid to suffering civilians of all faiths ever since Biafra. Today it is called Action by Churches Together (ACT) and when I last looked was supported by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

Mack's comment about prolonging the war by supplying people with food and medicine is 35 years old and still does not hold water. The decision to separate Biafra from Nigeria was not that of the WCC or Johnson. That was done by Nigerians and Biafrans. I agree with his comment about leadership motivating people. In the case of Biafra, it was churches deciding (not Johnson by himself) that food should not be a weapon of war, and sanctions that starved millions of women and children were unacceptable, especially since most Biafrans were Christians who looked to their churches' international aid for help. Johnson was skilled at motivating people, and Mr. Mack may judge about the rightness of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, treating the wounded and sick. Perhaps a winnable war is still the problem of many conservatives — Vietnam and Iraq come to mind. I fail to understand where I suggested that Johnson and his colleagues in Canada and ecumenically passed themselves off as military experts.

Again, Mack should study Nigeria's post-colonial history more carefully. My words in his quotation marks are accurate: Nigeria has had more military dictatorships than it has civilian democracy; Nigeria ranks near the bottom of Transparency International's corruption scale; Nigeria is still riddled with ethnic strife

and religious bloodshed. The recent hike in oil prices to US\$50-plus a barrel is in part attributed to ethnic rebellion in the old Biafra territory. Nigeria suffers, as does much of Africa, from the divisions and exploitation and oppression of British colonialism and imperialism which divided ethnic and religious groups to assist in the governance of the British governors, leaving the biggest country in Africa to pick up the pieces when independence came. My chronology is correct.

Mack's further comments about genocide are in line with current standards: we couldn't help in Rwanda because we couldn't decide in time if it was genocide, similarly in Darfor today. How many people constitute a genocide? A million Biafrans? Canadian parliamentarians thought it was genocidal, journalists saw it all, so did Christian aid workers. Are we not splitting hairs to prove our disagreement with, perhaps dislike of, Ted Johnson who, despite whatever human flaws Mack may allege, is only guilty of trying to save lives and take action as a man of faith and a man of action.

All of Mack's allegations, including the spurious ones that arms were bought with Jointchurchaid funds and flights used to move Biafran troops are old, used by the Nigerian military dictatorship of Mack's beloved Yakubu Gowan and his supporters and have been disproved many times. They are insulting to the churches, to the civilians who died, to the Canadians who supported Canairelief, to the memory of aid workers and to the thirst for justice by Ted Johnson. Mack's final comment of Ted Johnson using widow's mite to fly around the world to play a game is beneath response.

Hugh McCullum
Toronto

Those interested in pursuing the discussion in detail can go to www.presbyterian.ca and visit the online PCCTalk thread "Biafra and the PCC".

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

Hope with Cows

Photo: Guy Smaghe, PWS&D



This cow and calf — provided by PWS&D and ACJ — are helping improve nutrition in rural Nicaragua.

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* Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes de Nicaragua (Association of Christian Youth, Nicaragua)

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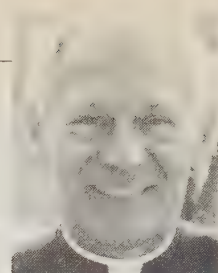
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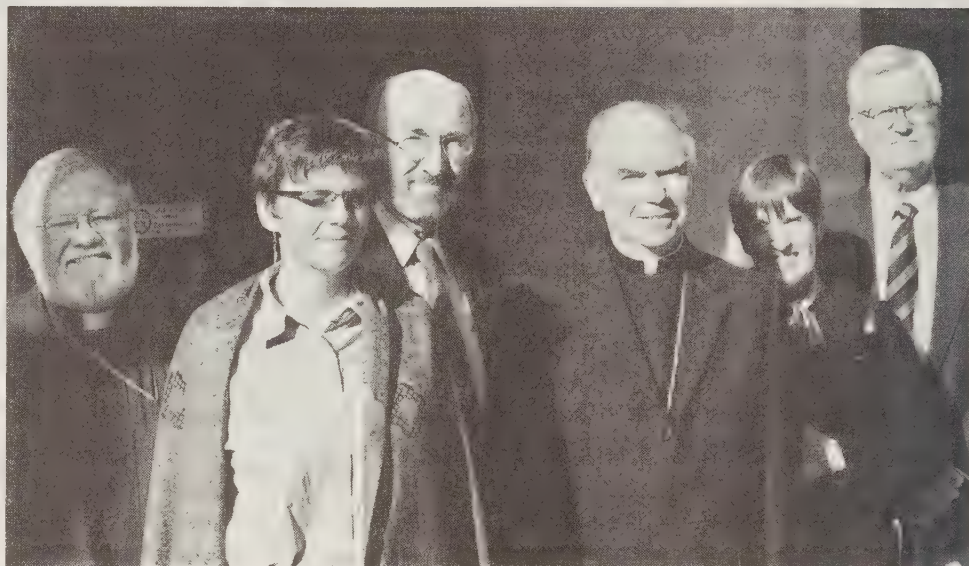


Ecumenism — a Canadian product

A statue of The Reverend Dr. George Leslie Mackay was dedicated in Woodstock, Ontario on June 30, 2004. It was presented by Aletheia University, Tamsui, Taiwan to Oxford County. In 1872 Dr. Mackay founded the first Canadian overseas Presbyterian mission. Known as the “Black-Bearded Barbarian” he practiced dentistry and trained local clergy. Today he is a national hero in Taiwan. In 1881, while in Canada on furlough, Dr. MacKay raised \$6,200 from within Oxford County, which established Oxford College, the present-day Aletheia University. Those funds were gathered from Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. It was a solidly ecumenical venture even before the word “ecumenical” was widely used.

One of the unique gifts of Canadian Christianity to the church worldwide is the example of how we get along with one another. Not just get along, but how we collaborate, co-operate, share, work together and genuinely enjoy the rich diversity of Christian expression in this amazing country. Canada does not have a state religion. No one group dominates in numbers or in outreach into our communities. Whereas people coming to Canada came from nations where one branch of the church often loomed large over the landscape, this was not so in their new home. Even in Quebec, where the Roman Catholic Church was in the majority, and spectacular buildings arose in even the smallest of villages, thriving faith communities of Presbyterians and Anglicans grew right alongside.

Across Canada strong Christian communities of every stripe emerged as immigrants arrived from the several corners of the globe. Today, members of Canadian churches consider it normal to attend the



Representatives of Canadian churches met with Immigration Minister Judy Sgro in Ottawa on Sept. 29 to discuss issues surrounding refugees and sanctuary. Left to right: Rev. Phil Heinze from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Jane Orion Smith of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Bill Janzen of the Mennonite Central Committee of Canada, Archbishop Brendan O'Brien from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Heather Macdonald and Rev. Jim Sinclair of United Church of Canada.

United Church annual turkey dinner fundraiser, the special Seventh Day Adventist massed choir recital, the Baptist Christmas pageant, the Anglican strawberry tea or the Pentecostal Christian film night. “Mixed” marriages are a part of every family and we attend funerals in every tradition.

When I headed off to university in Edmonton I met a fellow student with the name Yakimyshyn, who introduced me to the richness of the Ukrainian Catholic faith. This was a world entirely removed from my “mainline” protestant journey thus far. Entering Knox College I was fully aware that this Presbyterian college was part of the Toronto School of Theology, a consortium of six theological colleges representing the rich diversity of mainline Canadian Christian expression. But I was not expecting to meet and commence a life-long association with Mennonites. My friendships

with Erbs, Reimers, Burkholders and Freys from the Mennonite family have built up, encouraged, made faith practical and nourished me.

As Presbyterians we cherish a practical ecumenical heritage. As Presbyterians we do not hold exclusive truth claims. We are ecumenical by our very nature. We believe that God works in mysterious ways through the infinite variety of human beings and cultural groups that God has created. We hold no monopoly on the truth.

One *Peanuts* cartoon captures this idea of diversity and acceptance rather well. Charlie Brown speaks to his dog, Snoopy, who is sitting with his typewriter on top of the doghouse. “I hear you are writing a book on theology.” Charlie Brown continues to say, “I hope you have a good title.” To which Snoopy replies in the next frame, “I have the perfect title.” And in the last frame, Snoopy

discloses the title of his book on theology, *Has It ever Occurred to You That You Might Be Wrong?*

Isaiah 54:2-3 challenges us to consider welcoming a larger family that God will provide: "Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will settle the desolate towns."

Canada's gift to Christendom is a vibrant expression of acceptance, collaboration, mutual up-building, even encouragement and fostering. Ecumenism

Our Church is the body of Christ, not a body of Christians

is part and parcel of what makes Canada and Christianity in Canada unique in the family of nations. Ecumenism is part of our everyday lives. Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Canadian Forces Chaplaincies, and the Canadian Interchurch Stewardship Committee are but a few examples of national ecumenical bodies. While these are laudable national scale ecumenical endeavours, I believe the finest aspect of ecumenism is found in the church halls and community events that draw us together.

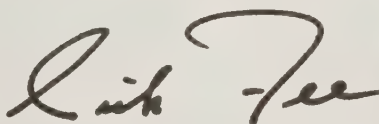
In the event of disasters, such as the Swiss Air crash and September 11th, government leaders should know they can call upon the wider Christian community who will express the deepest sentiments of all citizens in a united response to such events.

Leslie Newbiggin in his book, *Signs Amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History*, stated, "It has been hard to remain faithful to that early lesson to distinguish between proselytism — which is the exercise of human agency drawing people into conformity with an existing style of corporate living and thinking — and evangelism which recognizes the sovereign freedom of the Holy Spirit to make the preaching of Christ the occasion for doing a new

thing, for taking all that belongs to the Father beyond the present experience of the church and so showing it to the church so that the church is led into the fullness of the truth about Jesus — a fullness which is beyond the capacity of one culture or one generation to grasp."

Canadian ecumenism is an example, not just of tolerance, but an acceptance, mutual respect and expressed appreciation for the rich variety of Christian denominations. Canadian Presbyterians have played strong roles in this unique contribution to the world-wide church of Jesus Christ. We are: "Presbyterian by profession of faith, ecumenical by confession of faith and inclusive in our practice of faith."

My vision of the Presbyterian Church is one wherein people are built up in the faith and given the security and assurance of their salvation. Members share that faith, build upon it, celebrate it and live it out in their vocations and personal lives. They do this not in arrogance, not in exclusivity but in absolute confidence that Jesus Christ is Lord of their lives. They have a confidence that this fact can be shared. As Presbyterians we strive to have the mind of Christ. Our church is the body of Christ, not a body of Christians. This quiet Presbyterian confidence has been appropriately called "theological humility". Our approach to all our fellows must be one of reverence which commences with a deep respect.



Moderator's itinerary

November 5
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160th Anniversary Service

November 7
Elmvale Presbyterian
144th Anniversary

November 14
St Andrew's, Alma, Ontario
150th Anniversary

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Ivan barrels through Grenada, destroying church

Hurricane Ivan wiped out churches in Grenada in September, where the death toll has risen to 34. The Presbyterian church in St. George's was one of the buildings affected. Property, crops and livestock in Grenada were hit by heavy rains and high winds. Thousands of people have been displaced and have sought refuge in make-shift shelters. Fallen power lines litter the streets, trees are uprooted, rubble is scattered throughout towns and villages, and much of the country is without power. Ninety per cent of the island has been damaged — one of the hardest hit in the Caribbean.

The nutmeg crop, Grenada's major export and income earner, has been all but wiped out. The tourism industry was also dealt a blow when hotels were damaged and businesses were vandalised and looted.

The small island of 90,000 inhabitants was last hit by a hurricane 52 years ago. Ivan, a category 5 hurricane with speeds reaching 250 kilometres per hour, was the third hurricane to hit the Caribbean in September. Hurricanes Frances and Charley and tropical storm Jeanne were the other culprits. Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic were all badly beaten, as was Lucaya Presbyterian Church in the Bahamas. Rev. John Fraser, minister at Lucaya, said there was significant damage done to the church grounds and Grand Bahama Island was without power for a week and a half. The elderly



Ivan ripped off the roof of this church in Grenada and toppled its walls. The ruins of the organ can be seen in front of the window.

members in his congregation said the storm was the "worst they had ever seen."

Presbyterian World Service & Development, the Presbyterian Church in Canada's relief and development arm, is already helping Grenada (and other islands) through its partner Action by Churches Together (ACT). Immediate needs such as land clearing, food provisions, temporary schooling and rebuilding homes are being met by ACT and the government of Grenada. About sixty thousand of the island's inhabitants need to rebuild their homes.

A cash-for-work program (where residents help with rebuilding and clean-up and are given a monetary supplement) has

been established. ACT is distributing chickens to 450 residents benefiting from seed and tool programs operated by other agencies. Such programs ease the burden placed on farmers who have lost crops and livestock. Temporary school buildings are also being erected and will serve five communities, since most schools will not reopen until January. Eight thousand people will directly benefit from the relief.

PWS&D has made an appeal to churches for help with hurricane relief in Grenada and the Caribbean. To find out more, email PWS&D at pwsd@presbyterian.ca or call them at 416-441-1111.

Amy MacLachlan

Photo by Art Babych



Mary Corkery, executive director of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, and Presbyterian Moderator Rev. Richard Fee were among the religious leaders and heads of church-related organizations who met in Ottawa with Immigration Minister Judy Sgro to discuss the issue of sanctuary. KAIROS, a coalition of 11 churches and faith-based organizations, coordinated the meeting in order to examine issues of justice for refugees. The church leaders agreed to meet with the minister again in October.

THE HIDDEN HUNGER

Putting an end to micronutrient malnutrition

by Amy MacLachlan

Take one look at a box of Cheerios, a loaf of bread, or a bag of Robin Hood flour and it's clear to see Canadians are a lucky bunch. The nutritional panel on these products is often ignored, yet it signals the western world's nearly unlimited access to the vitamins and minerals essential to health and wellbeing.

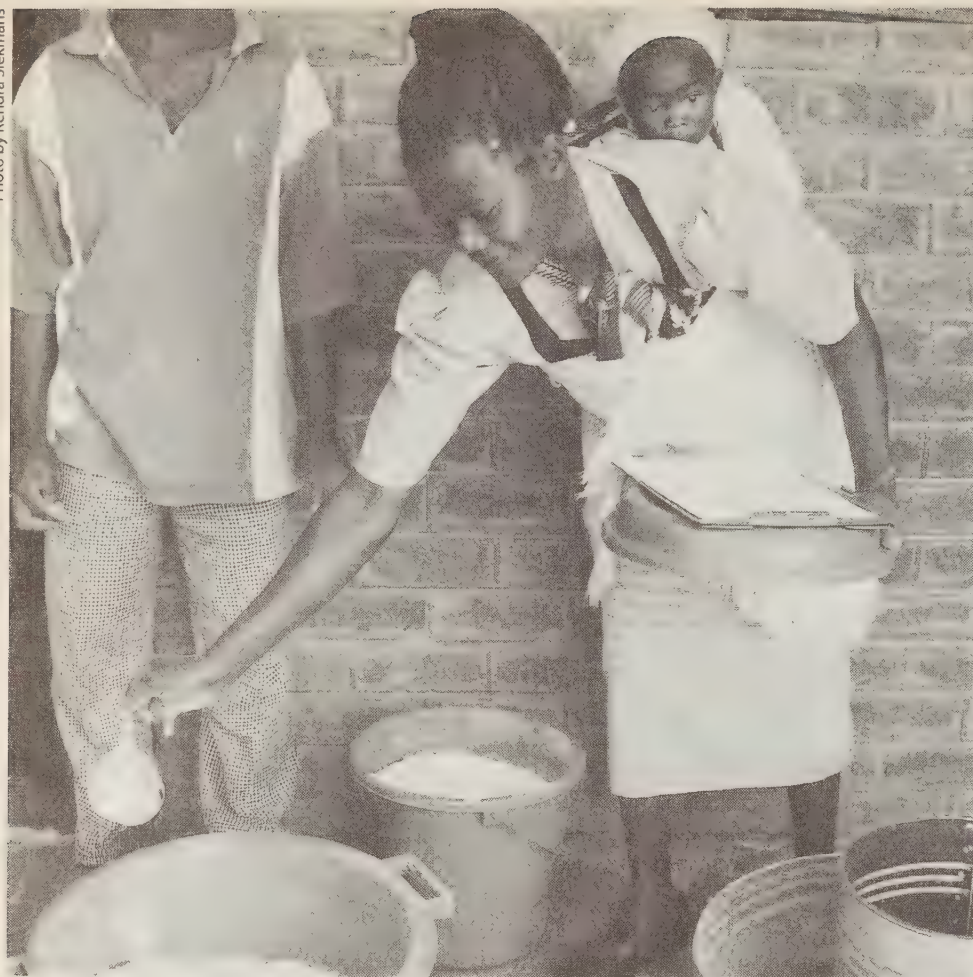
Others aren't so lucky.

Many people living in developing nations don't enjoy the luxury of good nutrition — and their bodies pay the price. Weak muscles. Stunted growth. Poor eyesight. Degraded intelligence. Babies born at low birth weights, desperately clinging to life. Adults with weakened immune systems, struggling to fight off illnesses so they can put food on the table. Malnutrition is often thought to mean a lack of food, but it also means a shortage of the basic vitamins and minerals needed to live healthy, productive lives.



Children at an orphan centre in Ekwendeni, Malawi receive a soy/maize mixture fortified with vitamins to combat malnutrition.

Photo by Carl Hiebert, PWS&D



Several Malawian villages have learned how to fortify their staple foods, like this woman adding a vitamin premix to maize before milling.

This lack of micronutrients, particularly iodine, iron and vitamin A, (deficiencies that together cost a country five per cent in economic wealth per year according to the World Health Organization) means more than hunger. It is a problem that is eating away at the health care systems of third world countries and compromising their economies. The World Bank estimates the gain in productivity from reducing iodine deficiency alone can be as high as \$28US per person per year, while iodizing salt costs only five cents US per person per year.

A report released in March by UNICEF and the Micronutrient Initiative — a 12-year-old Canadian response to the UN's Summit for Children — said about one third of the world's population do not meet their physical and intellectual potential because of micronutrient deficiencies. And although the situation has improved over the last 10 years, many developing nations still struggle with meeting the nutritional needs of their citizens.

Despite problems aid organizations are coming to the rescue, helping to de-

velop and implement food fortification programs where staple foods such as flour, oil, salt and sugar are enriched with micronutrients — something Canada has been doing since before World War II. "In Canada, we take it for granted," said Richard Fee, director of Presbyterian World Service & Development, the church's relief and development arm. "Who reads the label to see what has been added to their flour?" He is a strong supporter of fortification programs. "It makes sense," he said.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is involved in improving nutrition through Canadian Foodgrains Bank. An aid organization comprised of 13 denominations, CFGB ensures the food and grain they provide is nutrient enriched. "Many of our projects are providing a multi-faceted response to hunger," said Joan Barkman-Azar, program officer at CFGB. "Whenever we send processed food (for example, wheat flour), we make sure it is fortified before it is sent. At other times we send whole grain to be ground and blended to make a high energy food. If

fortificants are not already available, we will provide them."

Fortifying foods is said to be a more effective method than vitamin supplements. Ease of distribution (once a fortification program is in place) is one reason. A supplement is dependent on people remembering to take regular dosages. Consuming staple foods, such as flour, sugar and salt already enriched with the optimum amount of nutrients, requires no similar thought. Professor Levente Diosady, director of the food engineering program at the University of Toronto, agrees fortification is significantly better than supplementation. "With fortified foods, the consumer doesn't have to do anything; they don't even have to understand it."

Ease of use is another factor, complimented by the fact that fortified foods ensure people get the nutrition they need, even before they need it. "Women need iron and folic acid before they know they're pregnant, because brain formation of the fetus occurs in the first trimester," said Anna Verster, a senior technology advisor at the Geneva-based Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). By providing foods that are fortified with these nutrients, women receive what their developing baby needs, without changing behaviour. "We are not pushing fortification as the solution to everything and to all, but we think fortification needs to be done and that it makes sense to put an emphasis on it," said Ms. Verster.

Micronutrient deficiencies often go undetected or ignored — concealed by other illnesses that make outward signs difficult to notice. Because of this, it is commonly called "the hidden hunger." It most commonly attacks the poorest of the poor, who live in remote areas with little contact from government, industry and health care. They are infants and young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers — those most in need of nutrients, yet the least likely to get them.

PWS&D helps improve the nutrition of children in several orphan care centres and hospitals. Rev. Glenn Inglis and his wife, Linda, long-time missionaries with the PCC, used to work in Malawi with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. In southern Malawi, where the

Inglis worked, most people eat a porridge-like food made from white maize. The grain is less nutritious than yellow maize and it loses nutrients during processing. Each of the Malawi synods runs small mills that add soy flour to the maize to increase its nutritive value. When available, peanut flour and micronutrients, such as zinc, are also added. "They pick up very quickly," said Mr. Inglis. "Once the food gets used, the children respond enormously."

The Presbyterian Church also has a strong presence in North Korea. Since 1996, PWS&D has extended a helping hand to that country through CFGB, shipping wheat flour to children, and pregnant and nursing women. This flour was mixed with vitamins and other additives to produce fortified cereal milk, fortified biscuits and fortified noodles.

Another PCC partner, SOYNICA, is working in Nicaragua. They are exploring new ways to provide a complete set of nutrients using natural food. So far, they have used green leaf extract in helping pregnant women overcome anemia. Particularly helpful for poverty-

stricken women and those living in remote areas, the extract can be bought, or made at home.

A concerted effort to improve global nutrition was noted by the world community at the United Nations World Summit for Children in 1990. World

In less than a decade nearly half a billion people in the developing world have enriched flour. That's a step in the right direction.

leaders then decided that malnutrition in children was a huge problem that deserved to be tackled. Lofty goals were set as they aimed to reduce by half severe and moderate malnutrition of children under five by the year 2000. Other goals were made for the decade but the mark was generally missed.

Concerns were repeated at the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, a conference intended to discuss results from the last conference

and infuse new energy into world leaders' commitment. Goals were renewed, carrying new deadlines: Vitamin A deficiency would be nearly wiped out by 2010, iron deficiency anemia in women would be reduced by one third by 2010, and iodine deficiency disease (IDD) would be virtually eliminated by 2005. Although 90 million newborns were protected from early learning losses through access to iodized salt since the early '90s, IDD is yet to be a memory.

"It takes time to get programs up and running, but we're seeing progress in many countries," said Quentin Johnson, creator of the consulting firm, Quican Inc., helping developing nations install food fortification programs. "Since 1996, we're up to 16 countries that have fortified flour now available. This means 485 million people will be consuming enriched flour. I'd say that's a step in the right direction." **R**

Watch for part two of The Hidden Hunger in the *Record's* December issue when Amy MacLachlan will explore the challenges of fortifying foods in the developing world.



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Faith and the Military

St. George's sacred smorgasbord provides a chapel for all seasons

by Patricia Elford

A modern church just like any other? Not really!

Entering, a Presbyterian, Baptist or United Church visitor might think it's Anglican or Lutheran when seeing the chancel with candles, altar and liturgical colours.

Receive a warm welcome and bulletin from two smiling greeters, one of whom clicks a counter. Sit where you wish. United? Baptist? Pentecostal?

Look down — see kneelers, *NRSV* Bibles and 1997 Presbyterian hymn

**Several chaplains —
Lutheran, United Church,
Baptist, Presbyterian, Anglican,
sometimes Methodist or
Salvation Army — take turns
leading the service**

books. Look up — see brightly coloured regimental flags hanging from the peaked ceiling. Look around — see unusual stained glass windows, several by a local artisan, dedicated to the glory of God, honouring the Royal Canadian Dragoons, the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, the Royal Canadian Regiment and, one, a chaplain. A strong hint? Whether you're from "civvy street" or the military, welcome to St. George's Chapel, Canadian Forces Base, Petawawa, Ont.

Look around some more and note the slight colour difference in alternating pews — the darker ones coming from an older chapel. At the rear of the sanctuary are three backlit windows, carefully shipped from European churches.



Regimental flags hang in St. George's Chapel, Canadian Forces Base, Petawawa, Ont.

A mother takes her crying infant past the open library, past the overflowing local food bank trunk and into the crying room with its one-way glass. Another mother carefully navigates her chair to a wheelchair spot, her child gurgling on her lap. The service is about to begin.

The choir enters through the sacristy door, followed by the clergy of the day. Worshippers seldom know who will be the liturgist and/or preacher. Several chaplains — Lutheran, United Church, Baptist, Presbyterian (currently, Padre Dwight Nelson), Anglican, sometimes Methodist



The Sappers window in St. George's Chapel.

or Salvation Army — take turns. Occasionally, a child darts toward the Sunday school and office wing, disrupting the procession. It's never a problem.

All services are responsive. The Word is revered here and the readers have guidelines. Worshippers usually share the peace, an appropriate gesture in a military chapel. Preaching styles reflect the chaplain's background, personality and gender, running the gamut from front aisle "chats" to in-the-pulpit formal studies of lectionary texts. Services (and classes) follow the Revised Common Lectionary. Clergy use their own resources and *Seasons of the Spirit* materials. One thing you are not likely to encounter in most churches is the annual Battle of Britain service.

Conducting the sacraments varies with the celebrants. Eucharist is celebrated every Sunday at 09:00 (that's 9 a.m. for civilians) and communion is held on the

third Sunday of every month. Communion may be served with individual glasses and plates of bread or with a common cup and wafers. Baptism may involve water or oil on the head, or immersion.

As each chaplain follows denominational traditions, so participants are encouraged to pray according to their backgrounds — standing, kneeling or sitting. Intercessory prayers include local churches, congregational needs and military prayer cycles.

The choir's makeup varies depending upon postings. The organist/choir director, a Roman Catholic, skilfully uses their gifts for part-singing in anthems, instrumental offerings during formal and informal anthems and hymns, or solos. Many new lectionary-related hymns enlarge the congregation's repertoire.

Sunday school rooms are bright and cheery and the Dutch-doored nursery is well-stocked. Dedicated teachers take turns. Every year, a Christmas pageant is presented.

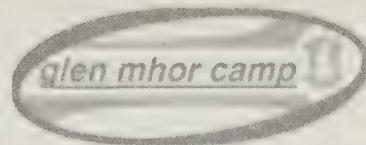
So how is church life here different or challenging? Denominationally varied emphases *can* cause tensions. Because of postings, a strong area of congregational service can suddenly diminish. High chaplaincy turnover means continually changing dynamics. Peacekeeping involvement creates family tensions and losses that civilian families rarely experience. A mother sits with her children but there is no clean-cut soldier sitting tall beside her; or a child sits alone with a daddy because the other parent is deployed.

What can be celebrated? Unity in diversity. Frequent communion services. Varied preaching styles. Wider world awareness. Strong support for local and world mission.

Look again — many young families. All ages, in clothing varying from traditional to jeans. Uniforms are seldom seen here; all are equal before God. There's laughter, chatter and singing. On monthly Fellowship Sundays, join worshippers at St. George's tables in the Normandy Court dining hall. Someone will show you the way. **R**

Patricia Elford, a civilian freelance writer in Pembroke, Ont., and a minister of the Presbyterian Church, frequently enjoys worshipping at St. George's Protestant Chapel in Petawawa, Ont.

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A missionary writes in her journal about a teenager's funeral that brings God's hope to a stricken community

by Shannon Bell-Wyminga

We buried Bethany yesterday. Some of the pain had dulled in the 11 months since she jumped off the bridge in town into the Fraser River, but not much.

Last year, we came back from vacation to conduct the first of four funerals in two weeks in Nazko, a reserve village west of Quesnel, B.C., of about 175 Native people and 75 non-Natives living within a 45-minute drive in any direction. Three weeks after her death, when her body still had not been found, Bethany's memorial was the last one. Before this, we had never been asked to do a funeral in that community. The people are Nazkot'en of the southern Carrier nation. It is a sign of trust that we are now called upon for these sacred

times. It also seems to be the way we are welcomed back from vacation. I hope this is not becoming a tradition.

There are too many funerals here. And there are too many people who die too young. How do we bring a message of hope to the grief of a family and community who are missing a 15-year-old girl who will never grow up? The women here brought that hope themselves.

Eleven months after we lost Bethany, we heard through the moccasin telegraph that her body had been found 70 kilometres down the river. We were getting ready to attend Bethany's funeral when there was a knock at the door. Bethany's mom and her partner came to ask us, in typical Nazko unplanned fashion, to lead the service. It was 50 minutes until it was

to begin. They stayed and talked for 40 minutes.

John and I quickly printed out the memorial service we had done for our dear Bethany just after her death and headed for the band hall. As I was unloading my guitar and music stand, Doreen (Beth's auntie) asked if I would be bringing the Cariboo house church songbooks. I said no, but if some of the women wanted to sing along with us during the service, they could look off my copy on the music stand. However, I guess the Holy Spirit was prodding me — I changed my mind and hauled in the songbooks.

The service was emotional but hopeful I think. I was able to share the certainty of eternal life and Bethany's hope since she had known Jesus. John talked of using our grief as an opportunity to find the healing Jesus offers. I remember now, the last time I saw Bethany alive was at the first of the four funerals last fall, a week before she took her own life. She gave me a big

hug and was excited to be going back to school again. She had plans for the future.

We had chosen a few songs to sing, including *River of Life* by Broken Walls. The song is so powerful with the hand drum, rattle and traditional native chanting. I was glad I had brought in the books as about seven women stood at the front to sing with us. They were singing the hope they had for Bethany and for themselves.

After the service, Bethany was carried outside. Usually a casket is put in the back of a pickup truck and driven up the hill to the reserve's cemetery. Traditionally, only

'If I were a butterfly, I'd thank you, Lord, for giving me wings ...'

men carry a body. But things were different this time. Six teen girls, all dressed in black and red, carried their friend and cousin. At times, some of the teen boys spelled them off for a little way. As we were leaving, Doreen asked if we could take the songbooks to the cemetery. "We want to sing on the way up," she said.

We all walked behind the pallbearers. Books were passed around, the women of our house church called out numbers, and we sang. As soon as one song finished, someone called out another number: *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*, *Just a Closer Walk With Thee*, *Amazing Grace*, *Come to the Waters*. They chose songs with a clear, strong Christian message. They were singing their faith to their community. In the face of their grief, they were singing their hope.

As we came close to the top of the hill, Doreen asked, "Can we do number 38? It was one of Bethany's favourites." Number 38 was *The Butterfly Song*, complete with all the animal actions. At that moment, someone ahead began to drum us into the cemetery. I found myself wondering how I would introduce this song at the graveside. Some people might think it inappropriate.

When we gathered around the grave, the teen girls stood opposite me and looked down into the hole. "Usually we think of this cemetery as a scary place, dark and evil," I began. "But it is not.

Jesus is here. He has victory over the grave — over death." I wanted to address the traditional thinking that Bethany might come back and steal someone's soul or inhabit the area. So I talked about how, since Bethany had known Jesus as her friend, the moment she sank into the water she was welcomed into the loving arms of Jesus. "We do not need to be afraid," I said, "because of that assurance. Today is not just a sad day; it is also a joyful day. That's why we can sing the next song."

We started singing, "If I were a butterfly, I'd thank you, Lord, for giving me wings...." I looked around and saw some of the teen girls quietly singing along. They knew the words. They remembered what they had learned years ago in Bible class with Bethany. I saw some of the young boys who are still in our program. They were grinning at me, not quite confident enough to make butterfly wings with their hands or an elephant's trunk with their arms.

I said some more words and prayed. Bethany's body was lowered into the grave, raised up again, lowered and raised again until it finally rested at the bottom of the grave. We each began to take handfuls of dirt and throw them into the hole. I noticed many people followed my example, throwing the earth with three motions in the sign of the cross.

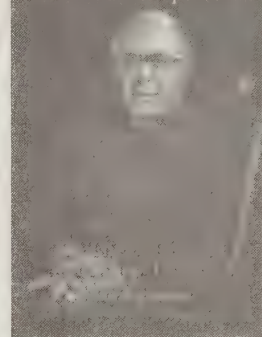
As I think about yesterday, I know the gospel was shared and lived. It wasn't so much through the words that John or I spoke, but God was glorified through the music. The women sang their faith — standing, walking in the midst of their community and telling everyone of the hope they had found in Jesus. The teens sang of hope in a God who loves them no matter what. The children sang and saw that, in Christ, there is hope whether in death or in daily life.

Bethany is lost to us but not to her Saviour. I trust that, yesterday, God used her as a witness to her people. **R**

Rev. Shannon Bell-Wyminga and her husband, Rev. John Wyminga, are missionaries with the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, ministering in house churches of the Cariboo/Chilcotin region of British Columbia. They live and minister in the mainly First Nations community of Nazko and live in a little log cabin in the big woods, far from anywhere else.

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Presbytery dismisses pastoral team

by Amy MacLachlan

The 150-year-old halls of St. Andrew's, Kitchener experienced something new when the three members of the pastoral team were told their pastoral relationship was "no longer viable" on Sept. 20. Senior minister Rev. William Lamont and associate ministers Rev. William Johnston and Rev. Colleen Smith were dismissed — what the church calls severing the pastoral tie — by a presbytery-appointed commission.

The commission was granted full power to solve an increasing problem among the disconnected team. Lay staff member Susan Shane, coordinator of congregational ministries, was also dismissed but will stay on staff for up to one year until her retirement. "All our thoughts and prayers are with everyone who is involved," said Janet MacDowell, clerk of presbytery for Waterloo-Wellington.

Problems apparently began about four years ago between Mr. Lamont (who was appointed senior minister in 2000 after a long stint as an associate) and the "dream team" that managed the Presbyterian Church in Canada's largest congregation. There were several issues that led to conflict within the team — one of them being the inability of the three junior members to get along with their leader.

Observing the potential for disaster, the team took it upon themselves to enlist help. Attempted problem solving continued at length as relationships worsened. They eventually consulted session, which sent a pastoral visitation team to iron out the kinks. It did little to alleviate ills.

Many discussions at presbytery ensued, and after receiving three letters from the pastoral team requesting presbytery's help, it appointed a commission

in July with the power to deal with the situation as it saw fit — including severing pastoral ties. "It was a very difficult decision for the commission to make," said Rev. Thomas Kay, minister at Knox, Guelph and head of the commission, "and even more difficult for the team to accept."

The team conducted its last service on Oct. 3. The official end of their term at St. Andrew's was Oct. 5, culminating in a final meeting of the team and the commission. Mr. Lamont and Mr. Johnston submitted their resignation to the commission, who accepted the

continuum, not the beginning," explained Mr. Kay.

To help the congregation continue its ministry, Rev. Vernon Tozer has been appointed interim minister. An interim moderator has yet to be named, but it is something Mr. Kay recognizes as necessary. "We've had fear expressed that the committee would make a decision, wash their hands and walk away. But we're not going to wash our hands of it. We're going to make sure immediate arrangements are put in place," he said.

Mr. Kay hopes the decisions will be made as quickly as possible. "We don't

'They are grieving the loss of three ministers who all had good relationships with the congregation and have done good ministry. There is a sense of loss. And that's very understandable.'

request. Ms. Smith allowed the commission to sever ties. Severance packages were accepted by the three ministers who agreed not to appeal the decision. Session will not appeal the decision either. "It was a very difficult meeting," said Mr. Kay. "It was quietly emotional. Everyone behaved with great dignity and care."

The congregation was informed by pastoral letter and many were shocked by the news. Mr. Kay said because the team had done such a good job of concealing their issues, most people had no idea there was a problem. Because of this, there was some confusion about when the commission became involved. "The commission came in at the end of the

want to meddle in the affairs of the congregation, neither do we want to leave the congregation with no ministerial arrangement while it deals with this very difficult and traumatic time," he said. "They are grieving the loss of three ministers who all had good relationships with the congregation and have done good ministry. There is a sense of loss. And that's very understandable."

Even amid difficulties, the team did its best to serve the congregation. "It's important to remember nobody did anything wrong here," says Rev. Linda Ashfield of nearby Knox, Waterloo. "These are all good people who had good ministries but they simply were not able to get along." **R**

Kobia praises Canada during first official visit

While followers of various religions battle each other over differences, others are advocating cooperation and the need for interfaith discussion. "We need to reassure our partners in dialogue that we are sincere and open in our wish to walk together towards the fullness of truth," said Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

During his first official visit to Canada on Sept. 30th to Oct. 4th, Dr. Kobia praised Canada's ecumenical coalition, the Canadian Council of Churches, for its forum model of dialogue that enables open communication between its Protestant, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox members. Expressing discord and dissent, and exploring issues from all sides is more important to the CCC than seeking a majority vote.

The Kenyan native said ecumenical organizations, along with individual Christians, need to follow this example and work towards settling fears among members of different religions. Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, supported his position, saying varying faiths

must engage in dialogue even when there are great differences between them and there is the potential for disagreement.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada's principal clerk, Rev. Stephen Kendall, spoke with Dr. Kobia during his visit to church offices. "He was interested in how the CCC does its work," said Mr. Kendall. "And despite its small size, it really brings quite a bit of diversity together."

His talk at Emmanuel College in Toronto on Oct. 2nd marked the 40th anniversary of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism. Entitled "The Impact of Interfaith Relations on Ecumenical Theology and Practice," his talk was followed by short addresses by the former primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Michael Peers and Dr. Hamilton.

Assuming his post at the WCC in January, an important goal of Dr. Kobia's trip was to meet the council's various church partners. The Methodist minister was at The Presbyterian Church in Canada's offices to meet with Moderator Richard Fee, Mr. Kendall and other



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia

church staff. In the evening, he had dinner with representatives from Presbyterian, Anglican, United, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Greek Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches, as well as representatives from the Toronto School of Theology. His visit to Ottawa on Oct. 3 fell on World-wide Communion Sunday, where he attended worship at Parkwood Presbyterian Church.

The ninth General Assembly of the WCC will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in Feb. 2006. Its theme is "God, in your grace, transform the world." Dr. Kobia said he is looking forward to the event, calling it an important time for the ecumenical movement.

Amy MacLachlan

Record faces painful changes

Continuing decline in church membership and, as a result, *Record* readership, has forced the magazine to restructure its staffing. *Record* editor David Harris said the decision was difficult because it meant two long-time employees lost their jobs as a result.

Tom Dickey, the former assistant editor, and Margaret Miller, the former administrative assistant and copy editor left the magazine at the end of August. "We are grateful for their dedication to the *Record*," said Harris, "but we couldn't afford to keep their positions given our changing needs."

"Circulation dropped by about 43,000 between 1975 and 2003, just a little less than the decline in the number of professing members of the church which was about 46,000 over the same period."

"This year, besides the usual losses through attrition, several large churches have protested our reporting news about the debate in church and Canadian society over same-sex issues by dropping us from the Every Home Plan," he said. "About

1,500 of the more than 3,200 subscriptions we've lost this year are attributable to dissatisfaction over our same-sex reportage."

A new position of managing editor has been created to replace the assistant editor position. The new position also acquires responsibility for copy editing that was formerly part of the administrative assistant's job. Lower circulation means that two-and-a-half positions in circulation and administration have been collapsed into one circulation/administrative assistant position.

"The new structure is more efficient and will give us more energy to put into the content, design and marketing of the magazine," said Harris. "There is almost always pain associated with any change, but in the long run, we believe this is the best decision for the future of the *Record* and its important ministry in the life of the church."

Harris also said he had received a retirement notice from long-time columnist Peter Plymley II. "We shall miss Peter's brilliant wit and we wish him well."

East Toronto presbytery encourages open dialogue on same-sex marriage

by Amy MacLachlan

When it comes to the issue of same-sex marriage, “there is a need to recognize the breadth of understanding Christians have on different positions and to treat all with respect and integrity.” So said Rev. Bob Fourney at a mandatory meeting on Oct. 5th of The Presbytery of East Toronto. Elders and clergy discussed the issue in a small group format and worked through scenarios designed to provoke discussion. “All voices need to be heard,” said Dr. Fourney.

Fourney was speaking on behalf of the task force put in place by presbytery in April to study same-sex marriage. It was in response to a question brought to presbytery by Rev. Jane Swatridge, who had been asked to marry a gay couple in March. At present, the church’s position is that marriage is a union between one man and one woman, as articulated by the 2002 General Assembly. Any minister who blesses a same sex union could be disciplined by his or her presbytery.

Rev. Dr. Art Van Seters, former moderator of the 125th General Assembly, gave presbyters something to think about when interpreting Scripture. “We need experience, reason and tradition to help us interpret the process of Scripture,” he said. “These are complimentary to Scripture — they are not to be used on their own. Are you interpreting Scripture on the basis of human experience or are you interpreting human experience on the basis of Scripture?”

An unofficial poll was taken prior to the small group discussion as to each participant’s position on the issue of same-sex marriage. A slight majority — approximately 30 to 25 — seemed in

favour, but more than one dozen were undecided. When asked to rank the intensity of how they felt, the majority of presbyters ranked themselves as concerned or passionate.

The groups identified Scripture, Holy Spirit guidance, Christian love ethic and justice as their four top authorities to consult when drawing conclusions on human sexuality. Followed closely by personal experience, theology, family values, common sense, conscience and

It’s going to be a while before this goes anywhere — if it is God’s agenda

scientific research. Current societal mores, General Assembly position, social science, subordinate standards and what the law allows were far behind.

The three final exercises were not publicly shared. Presbyters discussed the Bible in relation to issues of sexuality such as rape, incest, adultery, polygamy and divorce.

The task force will examine the responses and determine its next step. Results will hopefully be presented at the next presbytery meeting.

Jane Swatridge, found the process to be extremely positive and helpful. “It was enlightening for me. There were strong opinions at my table so it was very good to hear the passion that the naysayers are putting into it.” She said it made her realize that a solution is not going to be found quickly. “It’s good to

stub your toe against these things every so often,” said Ms. Swatridge, minister at FYI, an East Toronto outreach ministry. “It’s going to be a while before this goes anywhere — if it goes anywhere at all — and if it isn’t God’s agenda, then it should never happen.”

Sandra Demson, an elder at Rose-dale, said she found the evening to be very interesting and well put together. “I didn’t know what to expect,” she said, “but I got some pretty phenomenal information.” She recognized the courage it took for many people to stand up and publicly acknowledge their feelings on the issue.

Ms. Demson said most of her table members felt individual congregations should be allowed to decide whether or not to marry same sex couples. She knows first-hand how controversy can turn into division — she was present at the 1996 General Assembly that reversed the ordination of Darryl MacDonald, a gay minister in Lachine, Que. The congregation, which whole-heartedly supported Mr. MacDonald, split from the denomination. “All Presbyterians could stay in the fold,” she said. “We don’t want to lose the people who are in the minority.”

In a subsequent e-mail to the *Record*, Mr. Fourney said “There are some who believe that they have been silenced because of their sexual orientation and have been unable to have their church’s blessing on their same sex-relationship. However, there are others who are also struggling with a deep sense of conviction and belief that marriage is only between a man and a woman and that same-sex marriages threaten the very sanctity of marriage.” **R**

Israeli wall will lead to more terrorism

The 730-km long barrier being built in the West Bank by Israel as a security measure against suicide bombers won't work, state the co-authors of a new publication, *Barrier to Peace?* Instead, the wall (when finished it will be twice as long as the Berlin Wall) will serve to prod tensions even higher. Rami Elhanan is a Jewish peace activist who lost his 14-year-old daughter to a suicide bomber in 1997. He and co-author Rev. Alex Awad, an ordained Palestinian Christian who is dean of students at Bethlehem Bible College, say that the wall will make the situation worse as it angers Palestinians and fans the fire of militant and terrorist groups. Their pamphlet was recently published by Britain's Christian Socialist Movement and World Vision, a Christian relief and development agency.



Photo by David Harris

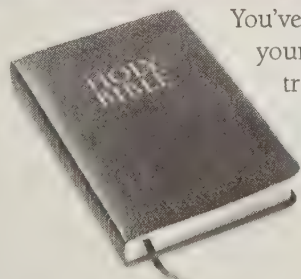
The wall, which Israel insists is temporary and purely a defensive measure, cuts across Palestinian territory, isolating people from their farms, schools and friends. In July, the International Court of Justice, part of the U.N., ruled that it is illegal.

Meanwhile, members of the World

Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel have joined in the non-violent hunger strike opposing the wall. Gathered on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem, the strikes aim to highlight the humanitarian consequences of the barrier.



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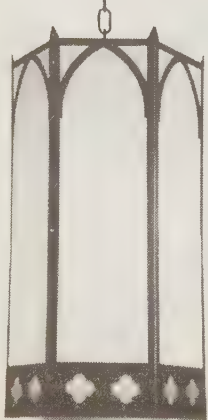
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world news

PM decries 'human tragedy' in Darfur

With the situation in Darfur no closer to peace, Prime Minister Paul Martin urged the United Nations to be more "robust" in its response. As the 22-month-long campaign of murder and pillaging by a pro-government militia in the western province of Sudan continues, said Martin, the Security Council is caught up in defining the term 'genocide' and deciding if that applies to Darfur. "[It] is a human tragedy of immense proportions," said Martin, in his Sept. 22 speech in New York City. "The fact is though that while the international community struggles with definitions, the people of Darfur continue to suffer. They are hungry, they are homeless, they are sick and many have been driven out of their own country. Tens of thousands have been murdered, raped and assaulted. War crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed."

A month before Martin's speech, Presbyterian Church Moderator Richard

Fee insisted that the prime minister and the Government of Canada become directly involved in the African nation's conflict. In addition to Fee, the Aug. 20 letter to Martin was also signed by the leaders of the Anglican, United and Mennonite churches in conjunction with KAIROS (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives). "Six months or a year from now, we do not want to look back and have to acknowledge, as many nations did following the genocide in Rwanda, that we should have done more," the letter stated. "The mistakes of the past should not be compounded with more indifference and paralysis. Let us not split hairs debating over what is and is not genocide when atrocities and crimes against humanity are continuing."

U.N. officials estimate that 50,000 people have died since the conflict began and more than one million people have been displaced in the last 18 months. At least 100,000 more people are expected in Chad's refugee camps.

Female mutilation condemned

An international conference on female genital mutilation has condemned the practice and declared the procedure has no basis in religion. The three-day conference in Nairobi worked towards developing a political, legal and social environment to implement the Maputo Protocol, a July 2003 decision signed by 53 African heads of state to condemn and punish FGM. The event was organized by the Kenyan government and NGOs such as No Peace Without Justice and sponsored by UNICEF and the Canadian International Development Agency, among others.

Delegates — made up of government and NGO representatives as well as affected women, religious and cultural leaders — not only gave their support to religious leaders who are fighting FGM but urged the development of counseling and rehabilitation programs to help the

victims of this ancient rite. In the opening ceremony, Kenyan Vice President Arthur Moody Awory, speaking on behalf of President Mwai Kibaki, said that genital mutilation undermines "our rich cultural heritage by stripping the girl child of the right to choose their future and claim their independence."

Although circumcising girls was outlawed in Kenya in 2002, many communities continue to practice this rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood. According to UNICEF estimates, two million girls are at risk of being subjected to one form of FGM or another every year worldwide. Up to 130 million women (90 million of them living in Africa) have suffered FGM or cutting.

Ninety-eight per cent of girls aged five to nine experience infibulation, the most invasive process by which the labia are removed.

Surviving Darfur

It is being called the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Currently more than 1.2 million people have been displaced within the Darfur region of Sudan, and an estimated 200,000 people have fled to neighbouring Chad. Since the violence broke out in 2003, more than 70,000 people have died, mostly from malnutrition and disease caused by deplorable living conditions. Thousands of children face starvation and millions are homeless. Everything that can sustain and succour life — livestock, food stores, wells and pumps, blankets and clothing — has been looted or destroyed.

To help people caught in a war not of their own making, PWS&D is supporting food shipments through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and a major relief effort being undertaken by Action by Churches Together (ACT) and Caritas International to provide shelter, water, sanitation and basic sleeping and cooking materials to help 500,000 people survive this crisis. It's an ambitious program — only achievable when churches around the world join forces to work together.

Read more on page 29

photo: ACT/Caritas

Presbyterian World Service & Development

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Changing Lives

by Karen Plater, PWS&D Resource & Communications Coordinator

Shauna Cox accepts a plaque from Mr. Randy Gurlock, the Director of Citizenship & Immigration Canada Edmonton to celebrate the contribution Presbyterian Churches have made to 25 years of private sponsorship of refugees.

On Sunday, October 3, 2004, refugees from many of the war-torn countries of the last two decades — Ethiopia, Rwanda, Liberia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Colombia — gathered with sponsors and government officials at the Edmonton City Hall to commemorate 25 years of Canada's private refugee sponsorship program.

This was one of many celebrations across Canada this year marking the establishment of Canadian legislation that enables private groups to sponsor refugees. Through this program, private groups and individuals have helped more than 180,000 people begin new lives in Canada since 1979.

Churches have played an important role in the private sponsorship program. In Edmonton, three Presbyterian congregations — Dayspring, Callingwood Road and First PC — are currently sponsoring refugees, though Calvin Hungarian PC has historically sponsored the most refugees. Rev. John Dowds, Morag Broad, and Joyce Rooney from Dayspring,

Shauna Cox from First PC and Rev. Dr. Lloyd Fourney attended the 25th Anniversary celebrations in Edmonton.

Shauna Cox, an elder at First PC became involved when she began to serve on the mission and outreach committee 12 years ago. Refugees were part of the mission. First PC has helped resettle families from Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran, Congo and Kosovo. "If I were living in a war-torn country I would hope someone would be willing to help me and my loved ones. I feel so blessed to have a safe place to live, enough food to eat and the freedom to speak my mind — even to criticize my government."

"It is in my heart to help the unfortunate wherever they are. None of us can help everyone, but if we all help as we are able, we can collectively do a great work. Some can give money, many can give a little time, an ear to listen, a hug. Some things are free to give and may mean as much as money." Like so many people who become involved in this work, Shauna testifies, "I feel that I am the one who has been enriched the most

by contact with so many interesting people."

Rev. Dr. Lloyd Fourney became involved in this work when he was minister of First Presbyterian Church. As a minister he helped the sponsorship committee prepare applications for Session's consideration. The plan would outline how the church would sustain the sponsorship for a year, including fundraising, gifts in kind and partnerships with other groups and churches.

"What an important expression of Christian service this has proven to be! People who might not have been inclined to offer their gifts before will come forward to help," Dr. Fourney explains. One Sunday he announced that furniture was desperately needed for a family due to arrive ahead of schedule. Following the service a visitor approached saying that he was moving out of town, and was prepared to donate the furniture at his acreage, if the church could move the items. Three days later a

convoy of volunteers with trucks gathered enough to furnish two apartments.

In 2002 the reunion of two sisters who had been separated for over a decade by conflict in Ethiopia reminded First PC why they were engaged in this endeavour. "Within days we helped the newly arrived sister acquire a health card, social insurance number and language assessment to help in educational upgrading," Fourney explains. "Today she continues to work and study English, soon to enter formal nursing education and training."

"World events brought into our lives by the media can leave us haunted by desperate faces. We can feel helpless or desensitized. Sponsoring a refugee can change us, and it can change a life. We can make a difference as we follow our Christian calling," Dr. Fourney says.

PWS&D helps churches bring refugees to Canada through the private sponsorship program.



Rev. John Dowds, Shauna Cox, Morag Broad, Rev. Dr. Lloyd Fourney and Joyce Rooney attended 25th Anniversary celebrations in Edmonton.

News from Garu:

Discovering Abilities

by Bella Lam, PWS&D Program Coordinator

Bella Lam and PWS&D committee member John Meek monitored projects in Ghana in September 2004, bringing back these success stories from The Presbyterian Church of Ghana's Garu Community Based Rehabilitation Centre. The Canadian International Development Agency works with PWS&D to support this program.

Florence

Florence has limited mobility in her legs due to a birth defect, which made growing up in her small village difficult. She was often isolated and shunned from the community. So when she heard how the The Presbyterian Church of Ghana's Garu Community Based Rehabilitation Centre, was helping people with disabilities discover their abilities, and integrate into their communities, she saw this as an opportunity to learn a new skill and gain independence.

Florence attended the centre's 18-month weaving course in Garu alongside disabled and non-disabled students. After completing the course, Florence returned home and began offering lessons to others in her village. She now has seven apprentices learning the art of weaving from her!



Garu photos: Bella Lam

Florence (far left), disabled since birth, has used weaving skills taught to her by Garu Rehabilitation Centre to gain independence in her community.

People with disabilities in Ghana are often isolated in their villages. They are seen as a burden to society, and face stigma and discrimination. Teaching young adults useful skills helps them develop livelihoods when they return to their communities. The Garu program also engages in advocacy work to dispel myths and reduce discrimination against those who are differently abled.

Samuel

Samuel lost his eyesight about 8 years ago when he suffered from Onchocerciasis — commonly known as river blindness. At first, he despaired that he would no longer be able to farm.

But with the help of the Garu Centre, Samuel has learned new techniques that enable him to manage his crops using his sense of touch. The project also provided his family with two goats for breeding. Once the goats have successfully reproduced, the parents are returned to the program, and the family keeps the offspring. The goats help provide milk for the family and fertilizer for the crops.

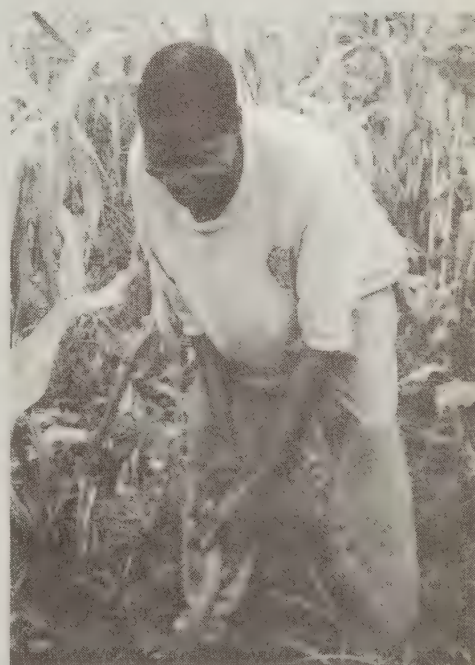
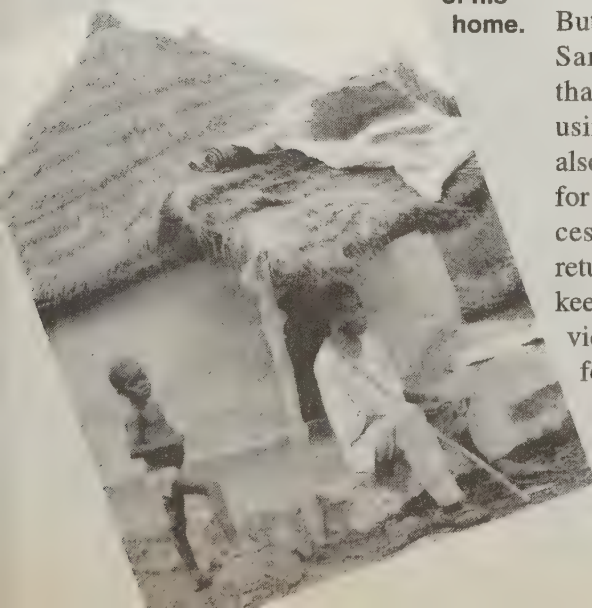
Samuel has discovered an unexpected side benefit of his ailment. He says his favourite time to work

on his farm now is at night. He finds it more productive to work in the cool breeze of the evening, rather than under the hot sun.

Learn more about the Garu Centre in *Partners: Meeting Friends in Ghana, A Mission Learning/Sharing Experience for Children and Youth* available from the Bookroom:

bookroom@presbyterian.ca

Samuel in front of his home.



Samuel, blind for eight years, has learned how to use his sense of touch to cultivate crops on his farm.



photos: Guy Smaghe, PWS&D

Children from Ciudad Sandino perform a traditional Nicaraguan dance they learned through a CIVEMN program.

A New Life of Hope

by Karen Plater and Guy Smaghe,
PWS&D Program Coordinator

Life in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua, can often leave children and youth in hopelessness and despair. With high levels of unemployment, overcrowded schools, and few recreation opportunities, many children and youth turn to drugs, alcohol and gangs for fulfillment.



Karel demonstrates a dance she learned through CIVEMN

gram for children, has expanded to include alternative free schools for vulnerable children. These schools not only provide children and youth with a good education, but they also help build self-esteem, creativity and independence through encouragement, culture and sports. CIVEMN also works with families, helping them improve their incomes and learn how to better support their children.

Nineteen-year-old Karel Orozco lives in Zona 11 of Ciudad Sandino. She has been involved with CIVEMN since the age of nine, when she first began attending their feeding centers.

Karel says: "I have grown up with CIVEMN by my side. When CIVEMN opened a school I entered directly in fourth grade. Then I went on to complete my secondary studies there as well. Even today it is difficult for most kids in Ciudad Sandino to go to school because of the economic situation."

Karel later took a six-month course in computerized cash registers with CIVEMN's support. "The academic preparation that CIVEMN provided opened doors for me to carry on to higher level studies. I am grateful for the support that CIVEMN has given me."

Karel explains that she also participated in CIVEMN's cultural activities, which help children and youth have fun learning about Nicaragua's history. "CIVEMN taught me to respect others and gave me the opportunity to learn and teach traditional dances from various parts of the country."

"My father abandoned me when I was two years old. You can only imagine the implications that it had on my life. God has allowed CIVEMN to be the father that I didn't have with much love, training and resources."

"I know that all that I have learned from CIVEMN has been useful in my daily life and for my future. I also know that I could never express in writing the extent of the appreciation that I have for CIVEMN and what it means for me."

Karel Orozco



PWS&D partner, The Center of Life and Hope for Women and Children (CIVEMN) is offering alternatives for youth. What started as a feeding pro-

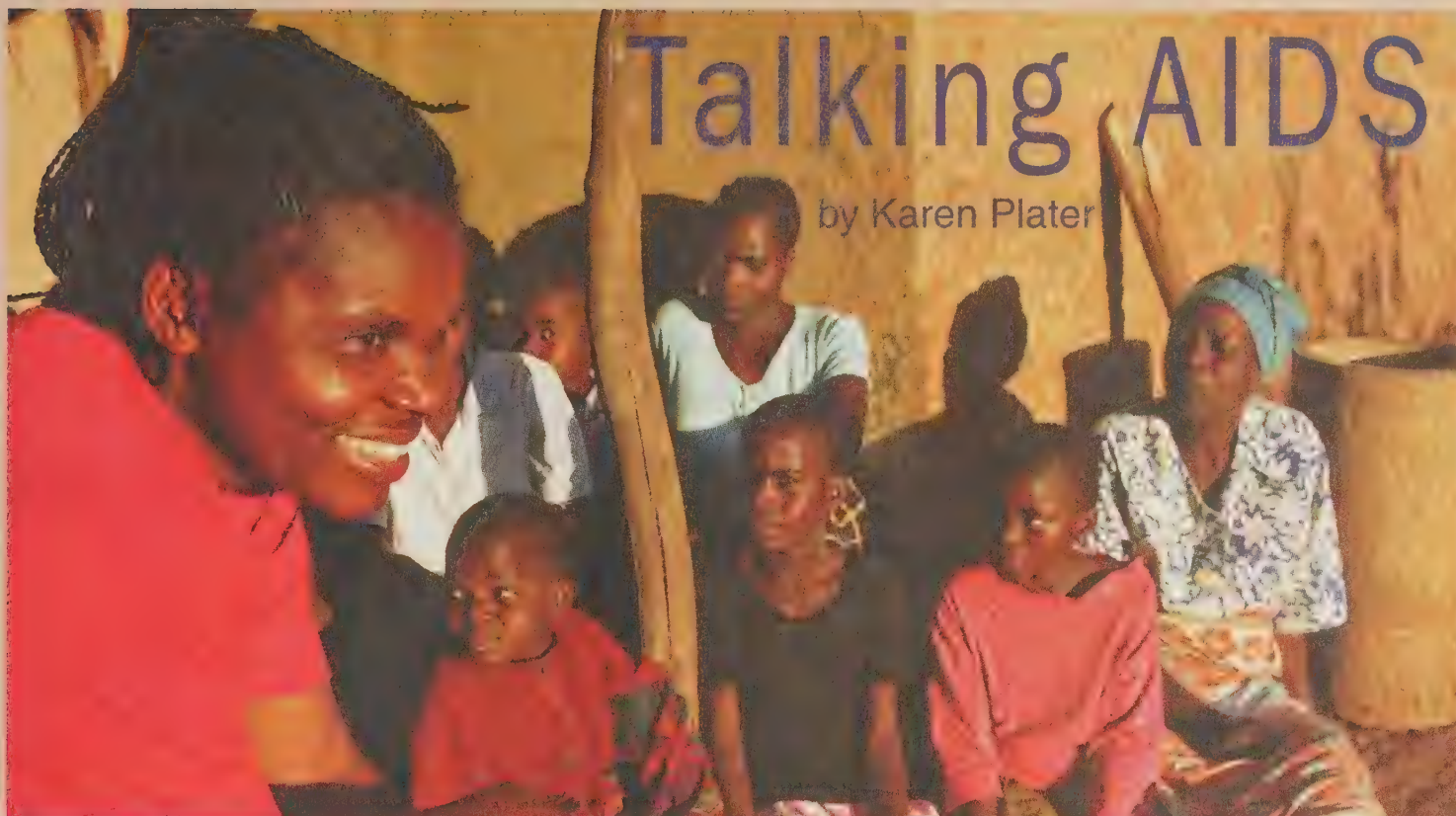


photo: Carl Hiebert, PWS&D

Esther Lupafya (left) talks to communities about HIV/AIDS and how to support people with HIV and AIDS.

Esther Lupafya, a community health nurse who coordinates The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian's Ekwendeni Hospital AIDS programs in northern Malawi, at first seems quiet and unassuming but, as you talk to her about AIDS, a feisty determination shines through.

Working with Ekwendeni's AIDS programs since 1990, Esther has seen HIV and AIDS grow exponentially. When the program began they knew of nine children orphaned by AIDS in the hospital's 600 km² catchment area. "Now there are over 6000 orphans in a population of only 68,000," says Esther. "That is a very large problem."

Chronically underfunded and understaffed, working in very poor remote communities, Esther works to stretch every dollar the hospital raises. "There is never enough time, money or people to do the work," she explains. From offering scholarships to orphans, to caring for AIDS patients in their homes, to offering medical services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, to running day centers for orphans and programs that provide voluntary testing and counseling, it is a big job.

"We rely on volunteers for all of our programs," Esther says. Volunteers teach youth how to prevent the spread of AIDS, care for patients dying in their homes, and support families caring for large numbers of orphans.

She is constantly perplexed by how to provide the best AIDS care. The hospital has a small program to provide antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) to AIDS patients, funded by *The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria*. They are currently supporting 200 patients, but there are over 5000 people in the catchment who need ARVs.

Esther is trying to learn all she can about other ways to help people with HIV stay healthy. But she says it is difficult in a region as poor as Ekwendeni. "How do you talk of something as simple as a balanced diet, when people don't have enough to eat? Malawi has a 'hungry season' that runs from November until March. People regularly don't have enough to eat in those months."

The Ekwendeni Hospital AIDS program is one of the reasons that the 130th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada launched the *Towards a World Without AIDS* campaign, and it is one of the programs

targeted to receive funds from the appeal. "HIV/AIDS is having a profound impact on the communities that many of our partner churches serve," explains The Reverend Richard Fee, PCC Moderator. "They need additional help to respond to this pandemic."



Children eating a meal in a daycare center supported by Ekwendeni Hospital. With an increasing number of orphans, families desperately need this support to care for their growing number of charges.

Uprooted and displaced by conflict, the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo have often felt forgotten by the world. Over the past two years PWS&D has sent \$30,000 to Action by Churches Together to help local churches provide seeds and tools to displaced people.

Not Forgotten by God

by Callie Long, ACT Communications Officer

The rural areas of eastern Congo are a patchwork of villages tucked into large stretches of forest. However there is nothing pastoral or idyllic about these villages. Forgotten by all levels of government, and most agencies, it is an extremely difficult place to live in.



Agnes Vumilia, a resident of Tuha Camp, eating maize grown from seeds supplied by the ACT appeal.

It is a region where, in some places, people are considered wealthy if they own as much as a bar of soap. In village after village, clusters of children too weak to stand, thin to the point of being emaciated or bloated from malnutrition, watch silently as their mothers explain to aid workers the pain of not being able to feed their children. Treatable diseases — diarrhoea, measles and malaria — continue to claim the lives of people here. It is a place that seems to have been forgotten by the entire world.

But they are “not forgotten by God,” says Rev. Kamate Kiro Kachalewa, a



photos: Callie Long

Loduka, age 5, and Vincent Bule, age 6, suffer from malnutrition.

local pastor who is working with displaced people in Tuha Camp, one of the places that has received support from Action by Churches Together (ACT) this past year.

However it is not easy, he says, to explain to people why they are suffering so much. “It is not because they are good or bad people,” he tells them, rather “it is just the way of the world, this suffering. God has not forgotten us. God strengthens us through these difficulties. And here people from the outside have assisted much.”

He refers to seeds and tools and other non-food items that have been supplied by local churches with ACT support. The assistance, though minimal, has had a profound effect on the community, resulting in a deep-seated change in people’s lives.

A year ago there was nothing in Tuha Camp. The people, forced from their homes by conflict, felt hopeless. Now hope is alive again. Tuha Camp has been transformed into a busy and productive place where every spare patch of ground is cultivated.

Elie Molo, the camp’s president of agriculture, says, “If people are more healthy, it is because of the food and the interest and devotion you showed us. [You] see how we suffer, and understand that we need to be self-sufficient by all means.”

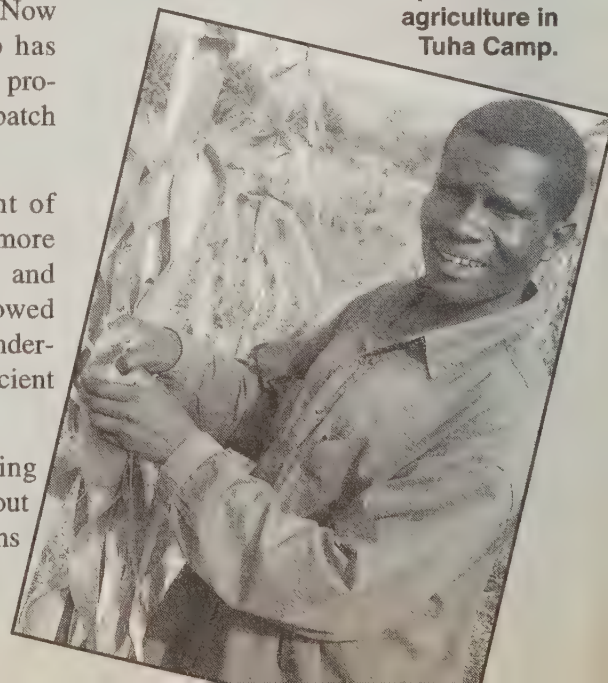
It is tenuous hope though. Ongoing conflict has seen many NGOs pull out of the strife-torn area, and threatens

to smother the fragile peace process aimed at bringing an end to conflict in central Africa. The constant movement of troops and renegade soldiers adds to a general sense of insecurity. People are trapped by a disastrous cycle of conflict, displacement, poverty and fear. They are afraid to return home and they fear they will somehow be completely forgotten and abandoned.

In this context, ACT members continue to tackle what seem like insurmountable odds. It is always a race against time — to save the life of a child, to get a pregnant woman to a hospital, to provide care to the elderly.

Emile Mpanya of ACT member Lutheran World Federation, says it is crucial to be there for people. “We have done big jobs with small teams and little money,” he says. “We have to be there for people. If not us, who?”

Elie Molo, president of agriculture in Tuha Camp.



Challenges for Relief Work in Darfur, Sudan

by Karen Plater with files from Hege Opseth, ACT Field Communicator

In the shelter Abdall has built for his family, Gadija, Abdall's pregnant wife, is quietly caressing their son Bakhat. He cries in pain, the sound of a typical malnourished child. These days it is an all too familiar sound in vast areas of Darfur, Sudan.

Gadija's caresses slowly calm her child. But the quiet does not last for long. Again the child's cries fill the shelter. Abdall sits down. The outside world disappears when he starts sharing their story. His eyes fill with tears as he remembers gunships and militia. "They killed several members of our family," he begins. "First came the gunships, then Janjaweed came on horses and camels."

Abdall and Gadija speak of the life they had in their home village before the attacks started. The small family was well off with 120 sheep and goats and three horses. "Our

attackers stole everything when they came. We fled and hid in the bush for a week without any proper food. That is when Bakhat started to get sick," says Gadija.

Internally displaced persons across Darfur share stories similar to Abdall and Gadija. It is estimated that 1.4 million people in Darfur have been forced from their homes by the fighting and attacks. Most have fled their homes with very few possessions and are now in urgent need of outside help.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that about 10,000 persons are dying every month as a result of the living conditions in Darfur. Many are children aged five and under, dying of preventable diseases. Half to three-quarters of the deaths are linked to diarrhoea, caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. "The combination of crowded conditions in the settlements, shortage of clean water, inadequate latrines, insufficient soap,



Newcomers arrive at camps for displaced people with few belongings and no shelter for protection.

and the mire caused by rain-soaked mud mingling with excreta, have combined to make hygiene an impossible goal for people living in small, tarpaulin-covered huts," WHO reports.

Action by Churches Together (ACT), a global alliance of Protestant and Orthodox churches, and Caritas International, a network of Roman Catholic development agencies, are working together to provide relief. PWS&D has already sent \$20,000 to support the work, and issued an appeal to Presbyterian churches in Canada for more funds.

ACT/Caritas has been repairing and installing water wells in many camps to provide clean drinking water. They have opened medical clinics in several camps for health care and emergency treatment. They are building temporary shelters and distributing plastic sheeting for shelters and jerry cans to collect water. They are distributing food supplements for children under five and providing education for school-aged children.

The work is difficult, due to limited resources, the remote locations and the ongoing conflict. But it is essential.

"Mothers are sitting in the open space and some under the trees, trying to comfort their children. The worst is



Water was found 37 meters below the surface where this pump was drilled by ACT/Caritas in Darfur.

to see the look in their eyes. They are so traumatized, so much in pain, so desperate for help. Women we spoke to said they feared what will now happen. They no longer have enough to feed their children," says ACT/Caritas staff, Ismat Saeed.



Temporary shelters built by the ACT/Caritas Darfur Emergency Response provide relief from sun and rain.

Running for AIDS

by Karen Plater

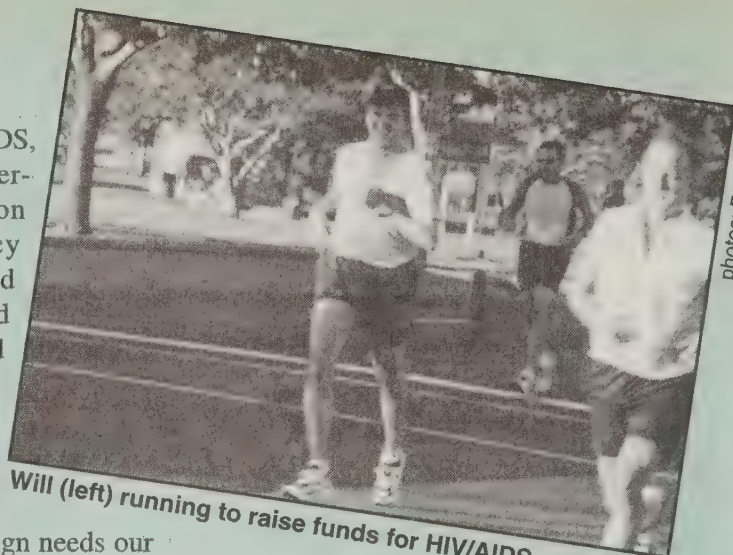
On September 26, 2004, Will Ingram and Tim Gordon ran in the Toronto Waterfront Marathon to support the Presbyterian church-wide *Towards A World Without AIDS* campaign that was launched at the 130th General Assembly in June 2004.

Will, the minister at Morningside High Park Presbyterian Church in Toronto, raised over \$1700 running the marathon for the campaign, and Tim, son of Revs. Dorcas and Noel Gordon, raised \$800 running the half-marathon. The funds will help support programs in orphan care, home-based care of

people living with AIDS, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, advocacy against stigma and discrimination and voluntary testing and counseling.

Will explained "I really believe that the *Towards a World Without AIDS* campaign needs our support. There are times when you are running the marathon that you get extremely tired and want to give up, but the motivation to continue comes when you remember what you are running for. I was incredibly touched by the generosity of friends and congregation members who wanted to make contributions for this cause."

On the marathon Will says, "I didn't set a 'personal best', but felt quite well at the end, which was great. My time was 3:44:19. Just to put some (humbling) perspective on that, a runner named Ed Whitlock set a new world record for his age group by running the same marathon in 2:54, and he is over 70 years old. My perspective is that he just has an extra forty years of training..."



photos: Roy Ferris

Will (left) running to raise funds for HIV/AIDS work.

This is one of many innovative ways that individuals and congregations are supporting the *Towards a World Without AIDS* campaign. St. Andrew's in Streetsville, Ontario, hosted a dinner to raise funds to support HIV/AIDS orphans. St. Andrew's in Sackville, New Brunswick, invited the community to a concert with singer/songwriter Catherine Cook, donating the proceeds from a freewill offering to the campaign.

As of the end of October 2004, over \$50,000 has been raised — ten per cent of the total goal of \$500,000. To keep abreast of the campaign visit:

www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/



Will Ingram relaxes with daughter Kate after running the marathon.

Hurricane Relief

In less than a month the Caribbean was hit hard by Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Ivan and Tropical Storm Jeanne. PWS&D immediately issued an appeal to support the work of church partners through Action by Churches Together (ACT). ACT members in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Grenada and Cuba quickly began to mobilize resources to respond — both in the immediate and long-term.

In Haiti, buckets of food worth US\$35, designed to support a family of five for a week, have been distributed in Gonaives, the hardest hit city. Each bucket contains rice, beans, vegetable oil, water, tomato paste, spaghetti, milk powder and some hygiene items.

In Grenada, a "cash for work" program will help clear debris and provide financial support for families in need. Materials will be also be provided to help families repair rural dwellings. Chickens will be distributed to complement



Cleaning up in Gonaives after Tropical Storm Jeanne.

seed and tool programs being implemented by other agencies, and temporary structures will be built to provide immediate schooling for children aged 5-11 years.

In Jamaica, ACT members are distributing food, providing shelter, promoting health and hygiene and helping families restart their livelihoods in rural areas and some parts of the inner city of Kingston. KP

Happy holidays

My father never used a map, he went on faith; I always felt like the Wise Men must have felt

Christmas morning came earlier when three small children roamed our house. They are teenagers now, so we're happy if they wake up before lunch. When the kids were little they pounced on my wife and me at 6 a.m., jarring us from slumber. "Let's open the gifts," they'd holler. "Hey," I'd say, trying to remember where I was, "It's December 4th. Christmas is in twenty more sleeps."

In those days, December was bright with Christmas programs and sugar cookies and wrapping paper. And, though our children are older now, they still love the traditions we began all those years ago. For them, Christmas ain't Christmas without the eating of Mandarin oranges and Christmas porridge — a thick cinnamon mixture — courtesy of our Norwegian ancestors. Mom sets the table, and the kids set an extra plate for Jesus. "We should light 2000 candles for Him," Rachael once said. But we settle for one. After breakfast we gather impatiently in the living room as I read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke. Then we open an array of gifts, small by today's standards.

As a boy I began looking forward to Christmas vacation in early September, about the time Mr. Kowalski started handing out those Math assignments. By the time December arrived, my parents were whispering more than usual and I was wondering what magical things they had in store. There was little in the way of extra money, so one of those magical traditions was the making of colourful candles we would sell door to door, hoping to earn enough to buy gifts. Not all of the traditions were welcomed. Sometimes my parents enjoyed travelling to visit relatives and friends. They had a highly sophisticated method of choosing whom we would visit, which involved the lay-

ing of a map of Canada on the floor and the tossing of relatives' pictures in the air. Whoever had their picture land closest to their hometown would receive a complimentary weekend visit from the Callaways. Sometimes we'd end up in Carstairs, Alberta, and sometimes in Loon Lake, Saskatchewan. As I recall, my father never used a map, he went on faith. I always felt like the Wise Men must have felt, heading off on those trips.

Dad's personal goal was to drive at least 500 miles without stopping at any restrooms. Every few hours, we'd tell

I've forgotten most of the presents my mother bought me, but I remember the gift of her laughter

him that we had "to go," but he would respond, "Eh? You say something? I can't hear you past these earmuffs." Once Mom reached over, turned the car off, and we coasted into the nearest service station. Every once in awhile she would offer to drive on the slippery roads, knowing that Dad would not let her unless he went blind in both eyes or suffered a level three heart attack. On these trips, my sister and I sat in the back seat pinching and poking each other, and to this day, when I think of Christmas miracles, I think of the fact that my parents did not lock us both in the trunk and abandon the car.

Apart from these short forays, I loved Christmas vacation. Though my parents had no manuals on creating great vacations, they seemed intuitively to know how. For one thing, they invested in others. Our turkey was surrounded not only by ravenous relatives, but also by famished friends. Mom and Dad were

always on the prowl for lonely looks in the church foyer, or neighbors who had no family within driving distance. To my parents, relationships were more important than a perfect meal or a tidy house. From the time our children were small we have done simple things to teach them to help others. This has included buying small bags of groceries for needy families. In fact, it has turned into a family adventure. We leave the groceries on someone's doorstep, bang on the door and run. In eighteen years, we have never been caught. Unless our neighbours are reading this.

With no television we learned to ice skate and carol sing and come up with our own entertainment.

Once while I was drooling my way through the toy section of the Sears catalogue, my Mother put her arm about my shoulder and kindly reminded me that the gifts would be a little meager this year. Sensing my disappointment, she asked if I thought Jesus got much for His birthday. I had to think about it, but I said He got gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which I thought might have been a plastic toy of some sort or maybe a casserole. She laughed. "You'll be getting that much," she said. I've forgotten most of the presents she bought me, but I remember the gift of her laughter.

At times I miss the days of being jumped on by small children. Since they are in their prime sleeping years now, we've talked about what to do this Christmas. Perhaps we'll switch the opening of the gifts to Christmas Eve. Then again, maybe not. Last year I bought each of them an alarm clock. On Christmas Eve I think I'll set them for 6 a.m. ■

Phil Callaway is a popular speaker and the author of a dozen books. Visit him at www.philcallaway.com

Christian schools reach out to students in caring and faith

by Nancy Devine

When Dr. Ted Siverns meets his students on the picturesque campus of the **Vancouver School of Theology**, he can bank on at least two things: they are eager to learn and he's likely going to learn something from them.

"The school is attempting to recognize the tremendous diversity of both the student body and the faculty," says Dr. Siverns, director of Presbyterian formation at VST. "We have students from Korea, Taiwan, China and Fiji, as well as a number of First Nations students. We have a large native ministries program."

The school's diversity is also represented in its denominational constituency.

At VST, students and staff from the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United Church of Canada work together to discover God's call to them.

"From the Anglicans, we learn about corporate worship, from the Presbyterians, we get a strong sense of theology, and from the United Church, we learn about social justice," says Dr. Siverns.

"Our worship life together is very strong," he adds. "Every Thursday, we have community worship and that is big-time important because it gives us a chance to hear the professors practice worship and gives the students a chance to practice worship. And every Thursday, we come away thinking that that time is very

special in our community life."

Dr. Siverns says the first-year spirituality formation course sets the tone for study life at VST.

"We get together on Monday and explore piety, as it is expressed in the Christian Church. It sets the tone for the week. In the course, we explore spirituality, as it is expressed, and as it has been expressed, throughout the ages," he explains.

One week, the students may explore sacred writing through the *Lecto Devina*, or closely examine the Psalms. Recently, the students visited a nearby Roman Catholic Church to meet the artist who created its glass-sculptured Stations of the Cross. Through these varied experi-



Vancouver School of Theology

ences, the students have the opportunity to examine not only their own faith, but also the faiths of others.

"The class also gives the professors a chance to meet with smaller groups as a kind of check-in to find out how the previous week went and look at what's coming up in the week to come," says Dr. Siverns.

Most of the students at VST are in the Master of Divinity program and heading toward ordination in the United, Anglican or Presbyterian churches in Canada or in the Presbyterian or United Methodist Churches in the U.S. Most other denominations accept all or part of the VST program, but some require studying at least one year in their own school.

The Master of Divinity program is designed to be completed in three years of full-time academic study, but Dr. Siverns

'We are thrown in together and we learn from each other. Our diversity helps us better understand who we are and what we believe.'

says many part-time students take up to seven years to complete a basic degree.

VST also offers diploma programs in Christian and Denominational studies and has a doctoral program in ministry.

While most students at the school are in their mid- to late 30s, Dr. Siverns says the median age has been falling over the past two or three years, which brings both insight and energy to their pursuit of theological study.

"The mix of students and faculty here offers a tremendous opportunity to explore Christianity in all its forms," he adds. "We are thrown in together and we learn from each other. Some people switch to other traditions, but we find that, for the most part, our diversity helps us better understand who we are and what we believe."

St. Andrew's Hall, as a college of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, not only supports Presbyterian students at VST, but also provides faithful and effective education to Canadian Presbyterian elders.

Rev. Dr. Roberta Clare is director of the college's Elders Institute. She says the



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- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Ministers are responsible to the congregation, not the presbytery. | True / False |
| 2. The session takes responsibility for the entire content of the worship service. | True / False |
| 3. Adherents may vote on the call of a minister. | True / False |
| 4. The session sets the policy concerning weddings in the sanctuary. | True / False |



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Answers: 1. False. See Section 249 in the Book of Forms. 2. False. See Section 111. 3. False. See Section 155. 4. True. See Section 109.2.

istry and discerning a call to being an elder. The aim is to create spiritual mentors whose faith, knowledge and experience is not only shared, but also acknowledged.

Dr. Clare says that, for some elders, there was no opportunity to study for ordained ministry earlier in life, but that doesn't mean God's call to them must go unheeded.

"Faith is dynamic, not static, and everyone needs to have their faith refreshed," he observes. "What the Elders' Institute seeks to do is provide opportunities for

these very talented and dedicated people to have just a few tools — a bit of a framework — in which they can share their faith and wisdom."

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would serve God more fully in all aspects of life. In the early 19th century, schools in the province were few and it was challenging to prepare for university. The school was founded on providing a high-quality, Christian education. It's a tradition that has continued into the 21st century.

Brian Hillis, dean of academics, says Luther College has evolved from a university preparatory academy to a student-focused liberal arts college, offering four-year degrees in arts, fine arts and science. There is also an opportunity to start pre-professional studies in a number of

'Many of us are left with a Sunday School kind of faith. Here, we pick up that faith, nurture it and grow it.'

fields, from journalism to veterinary medicine. Some of the programs can be completed at the University of Regina or other universities across the country.

The college's co-operative education program offers students the chance to obtain practical, paid work experience while pursuing a degree.


Although students come from high schools across Canada, Hillis says a significant number are from Hong Kong, China, Korea, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

"Luther College has high teaching standards and we feel scholarship comes from that," he says. "There is a real emphasis on teaching students as real people. We talk about our aspirations and our inspirations, while making sure we are preparing them for when they leave here."

At Luther, students are encouraged to knock on their professor's door and know they will find support and acceptance.

"We have an open and welcoming atmosphere — and a view that in a Christian context, we are here to help and serve each other in the world," Hillis says.

For the past 170 years, **Knox College** in Toronto, a member school of the Toronto School of Theology, has prepared students for ministry. The college has granted degrees since 1858, and is located in the heart of the University of Toronto, next to Convocation Hall.



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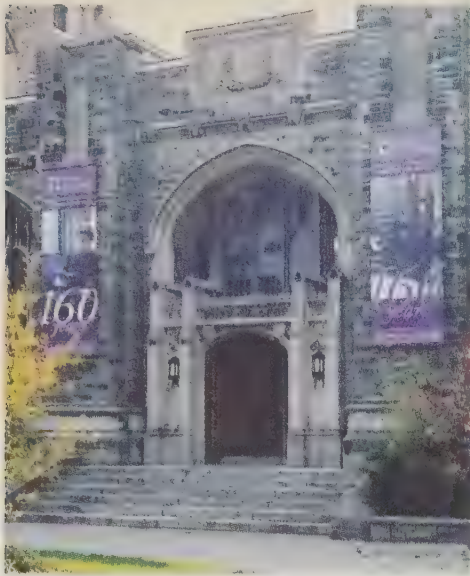
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Knox College, Toronto

Although Knox is rooted in the province's history, its students and faculty are focussed on going forward, not only in faith, but also with a solid theological education. Students come from Canada, Korea, Taiwan, and Africa, each bringing with them different cultures, life experiences and ways of expressing their faith.

Rev. Dr. Dorcas Gordon, principal, says that often means responding to student needs and making changes to curriculum and courses to meet them. This is especially true in helping older students prepare for ordained ministry as a second career, or those working on a master's degree in religious studies or theology.

Knox is also home to the Centre for Asian Canadian Theology and Ministry. The Centre offers various programs designed to meet the needs of Asian-Canadian clergy and laity.

"There is no doubt that we will continue to see students who study part time, working toward a degree," Dr. Gordon says, which is why the college now offers commuter rooms in residence. That lets students who commute long distances stay on campus for one to three nights per week.

"This eases the pressure on these students, who often can't uproot their families but still want to work on their degree," she says.

The mix of full- and part-time students from various backgrounds — cultural and socio-economic — makes for a more broadly based and richer educational experience, says Gordon, adding she believes this diversity is necessary in the pursuit of a critical education.

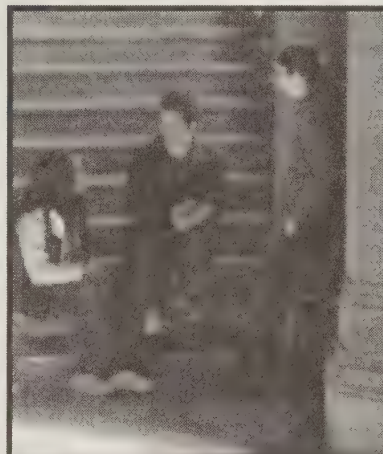
"As a faculty and as a student body, we are always learning from one another," she explains. "This is both a tremendous challenge and an opportunity to meet the Christian church at our doorstep. We have all come to the church through different cultures and different means, and when we come together, all these assumptions we have about our own faith and that of others are routinely challenged. It is tremendously exciting."

In 2004, Knox College offered its first online lay education courses. Students can learn on a schedule that meets their

needs, "meet" new people online and never have to fight for a parking spot in downtown Toronto.

Dr. Gordon encourages those interested in attending Knox to visit the college or audit a class first, whether they intend to study toward ordination or to grow more fully in the Christian faith.

"Breathe in the possibilities of learning in this context," she says. "Many find some sense of God's call to learn more about their faith. Many of us are left with a Sunday School kind of faith. Here, we pick up that faith, nurture it and grow it." ■



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◀ One hundred members of a downtown Toronto community gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking for a new Evangel Hall. Held on May 19, the ceremony also involved the filling of a time capsule while the Evangel Hall Choir, participants who are both on and off the street, staff and board members, sang. The project, to be completed in fall 2005, will include a new home for outreach programs and 84 units of low-income, supportive housing. Left to right: Councillor Olivia Chow, Rev. Dr. Sandy McDonald, Trinity-Spadina MP Tony Ianno, Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls and Joseph Taylor.

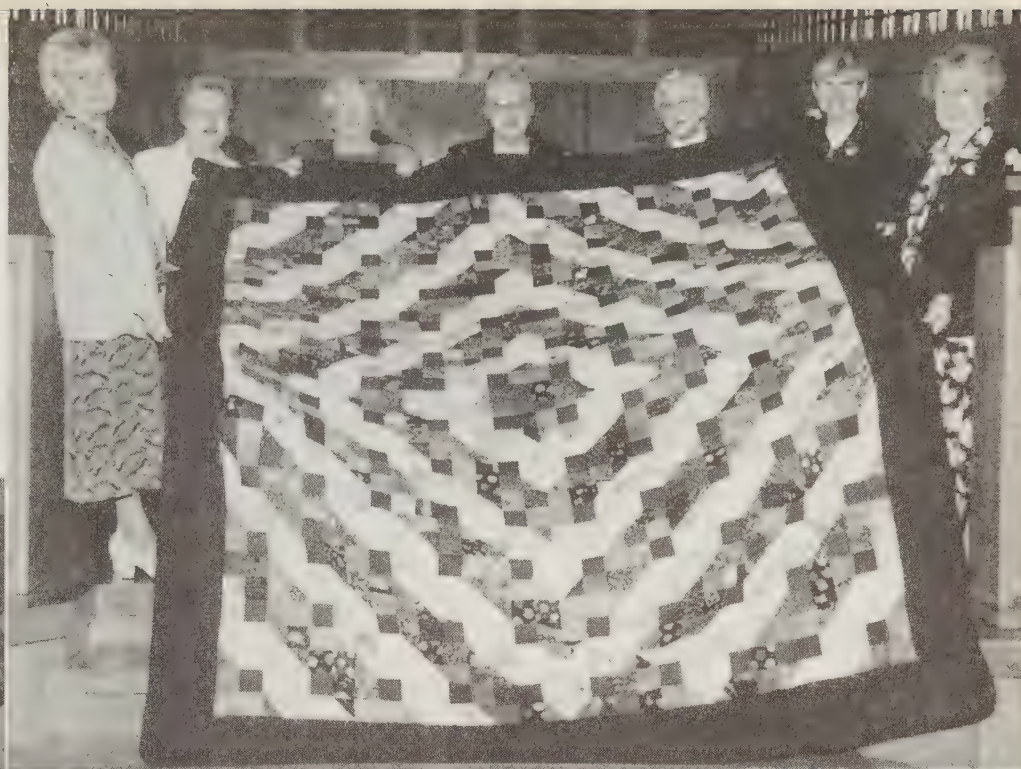
World Day of Prayer committee members hold two ▶ Panamanian flags at St. Mark's Presbyterian Church in Don Mills, Ont., which hosted the service on March 5. To increase awareness of Panama, the committee used a service written by the women of that country and the introduction and benediction were delivered in Spanish. Left to right: Marion Kezes, Lois Kerr, guest speaker Bella Lam from Presbyterian World Service and Development, and Jennifer O'Farrell. Missing from the picture are Alice LeBlanc, Mary McCaffrey and George Heldt.



◀ The Presbytery of Winnipeg gathered in June for a barbeque in honour of Ken and Carol Innes for over 20 years of ministry. Making a presentation of a Manitoba ox cart to Ken and Carol is Ian Shaw, Moderator of the Presbytery. A gift was also made to Presbyterian World Service and Development in celebration of Ken's participation in the Presbytery.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Photographs will not be returned. Send submissions to People and Places, *Presbyterian Record*, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, ON M3C 1J7.

The Chedoke Church Quilters in Hamilton, Ont., display the Scrapholic quilt they made for the Camp Kintail Quilt auction held in the spring. Left to right: Mary Sonke, Evelyn Walker, Marjorie Green, Thelma Wilkins, Pat Cumming, Anna Cooke and Marion Pacey.



Thornhill Presbyterian Church is triply blessed in having three members of the Knox College calls of 1979 within their church family. On May 16, they celebrated the 25th anniversary of the ordinations of Rev. Bob Smith (minister of TPC), Rev. Helen Smith (director of outreach programs at Evangel Hall) and Rev. Bill Campbell (retired).

The children of St. David's Presbyterian Church School in St. John's, Nfld., collected pennies in their "Penny Church." Their savings were used to purchase school supplies for the Francisco Coll School, located next to the Guatemala City Dump.



On Easter morning, the "young folks" of First Presbyterian Church in Penetanguishene, Ont., prepared, cooked and served breakfast before the service. They fed 65 people and made \$100 for the local soup kitchen.



A thirst for knowledge

Knox College, through the Ewart Center for Lay Education, responds to the growing need for education for the laity

by Rev. Susan Sheridan

In the fall of 2001, Knox College, through the Ewart Center for Lay Education, welcomed thirty-seven students into the Lay Education Certificate program. I'll never forget that Monday evening when the students began to arrive for their first class. People arrived at 4 p.m., having driven from as far away in Ontario as Fergus, Elmvale, Beaverton, and Campbellford. Some came expressing their anxiety about being in a classroom after being out of school for a long time. Other students expressed concern that they had never been to college and would they really be able to do the necessary work to receive a certificate. That afternoon, the academic wing of the college was alive with a spirit of learning and desire to know more about the Christian faith tradition.

The instructors were ready too. They had worked on course outlines that would introduce the laity to new concepts about the Bible, new understandings of the history of the Church and there was even a course about the different religious traditions that are present in our communities. The challenge for the professors was to present their material in only five weeks and meet the needs of the students who had come with such passion to learn about their church.

As administrator of the program, it was my responsibility to ensure that on the evening of the classes, all was ready for the students and the instructors. It was before class and during the supper



Rev. Dr. Stuart Macdonald, director of Basic Degree Studies and Theological Field Education, emerges from Knox College with two lay students, Robert Heath and Christopher Hoover, at the lay education graduation earlier this year.

break that I had an opportunity to get to know the students and their reasons for studying the certificate program. Often the student was encouraged by their minister to come. Others heard about the courses from friends and colleagues. But what I found in common was that all students shared a passion and need to ask burning questions about their faith tradition in these changing times.

With some anxiety, students in the lay program shared that their church was not always a safe place to ask these questions.

Who really wrote the Bible? Why do women theologians who study the Bible see things differently? What did Martin Luther really do? Why do some people like a certain type of music in worship and others like another kind of music? Why is the order of worship set in a certain way? What is the focus of the mission of the Presbyterian Church in the world today? How has the mission changed over the last decade? What does our church really say about abortion, euthanasia and gay rights? Why don't we talk about these things in our adult Bible study? How do we know that God is in control of all things?

I was present throughout the classes. Often, as the fifth week approached, I witnessed affirmation of how faith, life and study have come together in a new learning. Below are some of the comments I've heard:

- "Learning new ways to read the Bible has given me new hope in my faith."
- "Examining the words of the hymns as poetry and then seeing the chosen tunes add/detract from the poetry."
- "My appetite was whetted to learn more. I think that I was stuck theologically."
- "Some real illumination on perspectives of the text has made the Bible real again."
- "Being able to probe social justice issues from scripture."
- "When is the Ewart Centre for lay education going to add an advanced level of courses for those of us who have received the certificate?"

When the centre was established, its mission included taking the lay education program to communities that expressed an interest in offering the Certificate in Christian Faith and Life. In the



Nova Scotia laity find a safe place to ask questions.

fall of 2002, the first satellite location of the program was established in Winnipeg. Over two years, in partnership with the Presbytery of Winnipeg, the Ewart Centre through Knox College offered twelve courses. This past spring, there were nine graduates in Winnipeg. There are currently satellite locations offering courses in New Glasgow, N.S., and Guelph, Ont.

Knox College will offer an on-line Certificate in Christian Faith and Life starting this fall

Knox College also offers the certificate in Christian Faith and Life in Korean. There are thirty-nine Korean students enrolled in the program. The Korean lay education program has provided a window into that community that otherwise would not have been open to Knox College. Providing a leadership program for Korean men and women has given us an opportunity to be in relationship with those who are living and studying their faith from a different perspective. Instructors (with the help of a translator) have also been enriched in their own understanding through this experience.

Because the need for lay education has continued to grow over the last couple of years, Knox College made the decision that they would offer an on-line Certificate in Christian Faith and Life commencing this fall. Presently, there are two courses being offered. They are

"Reading the Bible" and "Thinking Theologically". As Knox College and the Ewart Center for Lay Education prepared for the courses to go 'live' on September 13, we confronted once again the passion of the laity to learn about their Church and their Christian faith tradition. Before the course even started, students from across the country were on-line — introducing themselves to one another, sharing their faith and theological perspectives on various issues. The instructor, eyes wide open, told me that the students were already talking and some even knew each other. After only one day, the course website had fifty-seven hits (or questions) by the students.

It is with great excitement that Knox, through the Ewart Center for Lay Education, engages the laity and their passion for learning and looks forward to their continued learning growing in faith, knowledge and understanding. **R**

Rev. Susan Sheridan is the coordinator for the Ewart Centre for Lay Education at Knox College in Toronto, Ont.

Resources

Total Ministry; Reclaiming the Ministry of All God's People. Stewart C. Zabriskie, An Alban Institute Publication, 1995

Equipping the Saints Mobilizing Laity for Ministry. Ed. Michael J. Christensen Carl E. Savage, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2000

Check the Year of Education website at www.presbyterian.ca/flames/education for updates of ideas, resources and events.

Keeping open the lines of communication in the nation's capital

The Presbytery of Ottawa

by Amy Cameron

People are drawn to the banks of the Rideau Canal. There's something soothing about watching boats of all shapes navigate the Ottawa locks and sail down the Rideau River. Just minutes from the heart of the nation's capital, many visitors can't help but then wander over to Parliament Hill, toss pennies into the Eternal Flame and take tours up the Peace Tower. Some might walk west for two or three minutes more, to gaze upon the Supreme Court of Justice or the Confederation Building. They may not know it but right behind them, on the opposite side of Wellington St., lies the Bank of Canada and the Department of Veteran Affairs. It's a powerful part of town. And right in the middle of it all is the rising spire of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

It was Scottish smarts that nabbed that corner of Wellington and Kent streets. Thomas McKay, a stonemason from Perth, Scotland, won the contract to build the locks on the Rideau Canal. The only two churches available in what was then known as Bytown were Methodist and Roman Catholic. So, in 1828, during a break in construction as Colonel John By tried to drum up more money for the project, McKay put his skilled men to work on building the first Presbyterian and first stone church in Ottawa — St. Andrew's. (McKay, who owned much of the land that now encompasses the neighbourhoods of New Edinburgh and Rockcliffe Park, also built himself an enormous eleven-room house between the two which he named Rideau Hall — it is now the residence of the Governor General.)



Across from Parliament Hill, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church sits in the middle of the corridor of power.

Access to power players, open communication and the tools for building communities remain integral parts of the Presbytery of Ottawa. "We can have a dialogue with people here in the national capital region, a chance that others don't have," says Rev. James Hurd, clerk of

presbytery and minister at Parkwood Presbyterian. Simply by virtue of their location, Ottawa area churches can meet with visiting dignitaries, have a presence at large scale events and respond to national issues in a more immediate way.

In addition, the 21 congregations that

make up the presbytery are working in others ways to keep the lines of communication open — the on-line presence of the churches alone is impressive. Thirteen congregations have websites, most of which are extensive with links to on-line bible studies, archived sermons and historical information. Spiritual questions that once might only have been asked in a minister's office are now being explored on-line by the churches in the presbytery. Grace Presbyterian in Orleans, Ont., for example, explains that on its 'Who we are' page that "some of us became a part of the Grace family out of doubt, skepticism or because we were hurting." The site has a section called 'Soul Food' with poetry, inspirational readings and humour and you can also find a five-year plan for the church, guidelines for submitting articles to its monthly newsletter, Good Gracious, and detailed information about the prayer group.

St. Stephen's Presbyterian has extended their website with a photo tour, including the memorial stained glass windows that are located in the chancel and nave, and links to pertinent information needed

for brides and grooms to be married in the church. Parkwood has mp3 audio files so that people can listen to sermons from the comfort of their homes and the site also lists email addresses for the members of its community.

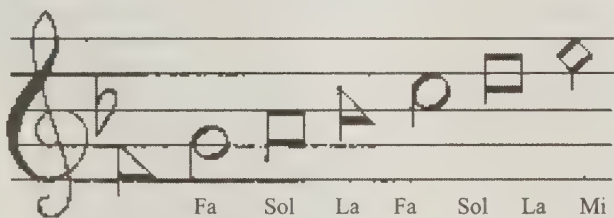
The presbytery is also working hard to keep building its community, especially with the younger generations. Websites

Our biggest challenge is maintaining connectedness

have on-line games and fun stuff for kids while, for parents, there's information about church schools and links to different youth-oriented programs. Once a month, the presbytery sponsors a youth service to bring together kids from all of the different churches. And Synod has just handed over the management reins of its 42-year-old Gatineau-based camp and retreat to the presbytery. Every summer, Gracefield Camp welcomes children aged seven to 19 for various adventure, voyageur and training sessions.

Perhaps as a result of its active engagement with children or its proximity to Parliament, the Presbytery of Ottawa is one of the few in Canada that isn't buckling with the burden of shrinking congregations. "We're not in the kind of situation that Montreal or West Toronto is facing," says Rev. Hurd. "Sure, we've got some congregations in the city centre with big buildings and small membership but the last time we had to close a church was about 10 years ago." Only five pastoral charges are currently without ministers.

While communication within congregations and on-line is very good, with churches scattered from Richmond and Kars, Ont., in the south to Gatineau, Que., in the north, the presbytery's main concern, says Rev. Hurd, is keeping the lines of communication open with each other. "Our biggest challenge is maintaining connectedness," he explains. "Even though we're an urban presbytery, the tendency is that congregations are on their own and dealing with issues. They become islands unto themselves." If history is any guide, the presbytery will not fail to meet this challenge. **R**



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Lesson from an outhouse

Fools despise knowledge; faith imparts wisdom

by David Webber

Boredom drove me to the outhouse more than anything else. It was the heart of winter, so cold that my teacher at the old one-room schoolhouse I attended gathered all of the kids (10 children in seven grades) in front of the cast iron, coal and wood stove to keep warm. As the students huddled together for warmth, she read us stories. I got bored. I suppose that's why I spent a good period of time surveying the landscape before turning to enter the clapboard one-holer. The view, locked in frost and dazzling sunlight, was a joy to behold.

In the midst of daydreaming, I noticed the metal handle on the outhouse door. It was at exactly the same height as

have died for sure if the teacher, who was well informed as to my capacity for daydreaming myself into serious trouble, had not become suspicious due to the length of my leave. She mounted a search party. And that's how they found me: -40 C with an ugly outhouse welded to my tongue and both legs turning into yellow Popsicles.

From birth, wisdom, for me, has been rather elusive. It's not that I was born dumb; my seven-year-old self just seemed to lack sound judgment. As a kid, I didn't mind this lack of common sense as it spawned some pretty good adventures. My family prayed I would outgrow this condition or better yet, learn some reason at school. Unfortunately,

The fear of the Lord is a designation of piety and faith, conjoined with love and hope

my seven-year-old head, which is why it seemed natural for me to plant my nose onto it. Young noses being what they are in winter — always wet — mine instantly froze to the metal latch as though it had been welded there. The pain was impressive. I tried in vain to back out of my predicament and wailed like a banshee for help. No one heard. I howled louder, adding a few expletives that I had learned from my dad. Cussing at the top of my lungs necessitated the flailing of my tongue, which also ended up freezing to the metal door-latch. Fear quickly ran her course and my bladder decided to get involved in the adventure.

I never dreamed death could be so miserable, and I'm convinced I would



high school seemed to make my ignorance even more pronounced, adding girls and cars to the stew. Too many years in college and university yielded little — I just learned how to make really intelligent bad decisions. In fact, when wisdom did begin to arrive in my life to any appreciable degree, I was about thirty years of age. Oddly enough, it was around the same time that I came to faith in God. I never really associated the two until the other day.

I was reading the book of Job and not enjoying it very much (how do you read Job and enjoy it? I always do it as a mat-

Since coming to faith in God I have not frozen my tongue to a single outhouse

ter of discipline, like eating my peas), when I got to chapter 28. Most biblical scholars agree that it is an interlude in the argument between Job and his friends; one which does not clearly say who is speaking nor who is addressed. It's a little confusing as to why it is there at all for it seems to interrupt the flow of the book.

I'm not a biblical scholar, but I disagree. In my opinion, God inspired it. The chapter is addressed to all readers of the book, and its purpose is to give us a little break from the tiresome cast of Job and his friends, who have gone on ad nauseam in their arguments. Perhaps the purpose is to hold wisdom up so that we can clearly see that neither Job nor his so-called friends have any. Whatever the case, the point of Job 28 seems very clear: one can find precious stones that are deep in the earth but one cannot find wisdom on their own; one can have all the valuable things on earth but one cannot buy wisdom; one can be the smartest of all of God's creatures and yet not know where wisdom can be found or learned. Wisdom resides solely with God and only God has "... established it, and searched it out. And he (God) said to humankind, 'Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.'" (Job 28:28)

It's not just the book of Job that makes this point. The book of Psalms says: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding."* (Psalm 111:10). And the book of Proverbs says: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."* (Proverbs 1:7).

"The fear of the Lord" means not what you might be thinking. From the Bible's perspective, at least in the Old Testament, "the fear of the Lord" is used as a designation of true piety and faith. It is a fear conjoined with love and hope, and is therefore not a slavish dread. It is, rather, a filial reverence with regards to God. "Fear of the Lord" describes a personal faith relationship with God. And from the Bible's perspective this is where wisdom is found.

The Bible is not talking about just some religious kind of enlightenment detached from the world. In the book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified and speaks: *"I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment. I know where to discover knowledge and discernment."* (Proverbs 8:12). Biblical wisdom is both religious and practical. Stemming from "the fear of the Lord" it branches out to touch all of life, as the extended commentary in Proverbs indicates. *"Wisdom takes insights gleaned from the knowledge of God's ways and applies them in the daily walk. This combination of insight and obedience (and all insight must issue in obedience) relates wisdom to the prophetic emphasis on the knowledge of God."*

I have noticed that since coming to faith in God I have not frozen my tongue to a single outhouse. My point is that in my own experience, as I grow in my faith and knowledge of God, a real and practical wisdom has begun to develop in my life. Oh, I know I've got a long way to go, but at least I know where to go, or better put, to whom to go, to find wisdom. And, that's a lesson learned from an outhouse. **R**

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C., house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter's Aspen: Embracing the Creator's Fire*.

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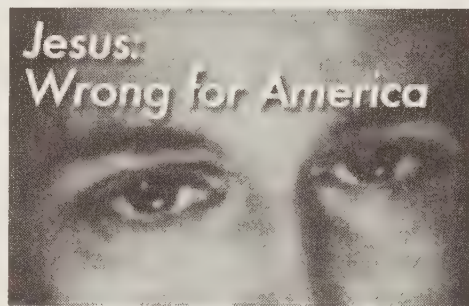
Jesus is a silent candidate in the U.S. presidential race

By Andrew Faiz

There is an amusing commercial on the anti-Bush website — gwbush04.com — in which Jesus Christ is presented as a presidential candidate. In the form of an attack ad, the political send-up offers a quote from Christ which is then followed by its Republican interpretation. “Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.” The Bush critics believe George W. would reason that this means: “Jesus favours more government handouts for welfare cheats.” My favourite is that great advice drummed into all of us in Sunday School: “Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other.” The interpretation: “Can we trust Jesus to fight the War on Terror?”

The ad concludes with the dire pronouncement: “Jesus. Wrong on social services. Wrong on crime. Wrong on defense. Wrong for America.” There is irony in this, and that is the intention, because George Bush named Christ his favourite philosopher during the 2000 election campaign. He credits Billy Graham for “planting a mustard seed in my soul. It was the beginning of a new walk where I would commit my heart to Jesus Christ.” The journey began twenty years ago and since then, according to his autobiography, Bush has read the Bible several times, often with the aid of 365-day readers. “I have also learned the power of prayer. I pray for guidance. I do not pray for earthly things, but for heavenly things, for wisdom and patience and understanding. My faith gives me focus and perspective. It teaches humility.”

During the 2004 election campaign Jesus has become an interesting player. Critics from both the left and the right have questioned Bush’s commitment



Can we trust Jesus to fight the War on Terror?

to Christ. In the process, we see some of the many different ways that Christ is viewed in our society. In the “Jesus Is Wrong For America” ad, Christ is presented as having true liberal values, which are then mocked by the Republican Party. Jesus is a metaphor for social justice issues. The same is true for the folks at Religiousleft.net, but they don’t

Is Jesus a Republican or a Democrat? Does he believe in social justice or moral correctness?

have time for humour. On their website you’ll find a very sincere issue-by-issue comparison between Bush and Christ. They note that “the Bush presidency is the most resolutely ‘faith-based’ in modern times.” And then go on to warn, “Jesus says, ‘Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.’” “The point is simple: Bush says he loves Jesus but that’s just a cover to hide his evil intentions. Tompaine.com concurs, Bush is using Jesus. Another website plainly asks, “Is George Bush The Anti-Christ?”

Cuttingedge.com thinks George Jr. is

not a Christian but an Illuminist, worshipping obelisks and hanging out with Masons. They believe Bush is leading us to a “planned” WWII, so his cronies can consolidate power. The bottom line, they suggest, is don’t be fooled by all his Jesus talk, it exists only to cover his true intentions. After all, Bush (and Kerry, for that matter) was a member of the Cross & Bones society at Yale, which apparently has more evil intentions than keggers for over-privileged undergrads.

Thespoof.com accepts neither Jesus nor George as sincere. There, a ‘news’ article reports that President Bush legally changed his name to President Jesus. The moniker shift was inspired by God, via a burning bush in the White House Rose Garden. Whitehouse.org has a similar opinion of Christ. On that website, they offer buttons for US\$1.99 that declare, “Jesus Votes Republican”. The button may not be the spoof it is intended to be. Jesus and God are ubiquitous in über-Conservative literature. For these folks Jesus is a metaphor for morality. “Don’t let black-robed tyrants [judges] turn America into an atheist state! Turn America back to God!” screams a plea at Conservativepetitions.com.

So, who is Jesus? A Republican or a Democrat? Does he believe in social justice or moral correctness? I suspect He may be a little of everything. And I suspect that for each person reading this, He’s a different metaphor. And I hope the real Jesus will bend the ear of whoever occupies the White House for the next four years. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

Arnold, Joan, September 4, 2004, after a brave battle with cancer. Treasurer, inspiration, member of Knox Cannington, Ont. Glowed with laughter, faithfulness and grace always.

Brown, John, passed away in his 82nd year. Born, raised, and residing in Kamloops, B.C., all his life, he was a member of St. Andrew's since 1938. An elder for many years, John was instrumental in the building of St. Andrew's at its present location. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Joan, and their three children and their families.

Boyes, Earl, August 30, 1911 to August 13, 2004, beloved husband of Marie (Ballantyne) Boyes, December 20, 1911 to April 22, 1998. Lifetime members of Avonton Presbyterian Church, Avonton, Ont. Together again in the presence of our Lord.

Cameron, Charles, 1917-2004, elder and life member of Knox Presbyterian Church, Neepawa, Man.

de Vries, John, at age 75, passed into glory on May 15th after a short bout with cancer. An immigrant from Holland, he first settled in Montreal before moving to Kamloops, B.C., where he was owner/operator of Norkam Lock and Cycle. He is survived by his wife, Corrie, and their six children and their families. An elder of St. Andrew's, he will be greatly missed. John was also an avid supporter of PWS&D.

Dunn, Alf, died on October 2, 2004. A long-time member, elder, and board member of First Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay, Ont. A good and faithful servant.

Johnstone, Jack, 1921-2004, elder and life member of Knox Presbyterian Church, Neepawa, Man.

Moses, Margaret, A lifelong member of Avonton Presbyterian Church, Avonton, Ont., passed away September 23, 2004.

Channon, Owen, The Rev. Owen Channon of Dartmouth, N.S., died on September 15, 2004 at the age of 86. A native of Montreal, Que., he was a graduate of McGill University (B.A. 1948), The Presbyterian College, Montreal (B.D. 1951), Simmons College, USA (M.Sc Library Science 1969). On May 18, 1951, he was ordained as a minister of Word & Sacrament in St. Andrew's Church, Arnprior, Ont.; his first Charge was this congregation and Dewar's, Ont. He also served as the minister of St. Andrew's Church, Valcartier, Que., and the

two point Charge of St. John's Church, Windsor and St. James' Church, Noel Road, N.S. He retired in 1983. For many years after his retirement, he provided pulpit supply in several Charges, including extensive periods of service in the River John Charge, St. Andrew's Church, Pictou and the West River Charge all in the Presbytery of Pictou and in the First Sackville Church, Lower Sackville, N.S., in the Presbytery of Halifax and Lunenburg. He was the Honorary Assistant Minister at St. Andrew's Church, Dartmouth, N.S., from 1969-71 and from 1983 until his death. While he lived in the United States, he provided pulpit supply in several congregations.

Owen Channon was very active in the Courts of the Church; in 1980, he was elected as the Moderator of The Synod of the Atlantic Provinces.

During his life, Owen also worked as a librarian, teacher, journalist and newspaper editor. He wrote many articles and composed several hymns — both the words and the music.

Owen Channon was a devoted and caring pastor, very generous in attitude and action, deeply devoted to Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel.

He is survived by his spouse of 62 years, Marian, and his five daughters — Mary, Ellen, Gwen, Ann and Susan and four grandchildren.

A service of Thanksgiving was held at St. Andrew's Church, Dartmouth, N.S., on September 19, 2004, conducted by the minister, Rev. Dr. P.A. (Sandy) McDonald, together with the Moderator of The Presbytery of Halifax and Lunenburg, Rev. Dr. D. Laurence DeWolfe and the Rev. Dr. L. George Macdonald.

Taylor, Charles E., The Rev. Charles E. Taylor of LaHave Islands, Lunenburg County, N.S., died on September 21, 2004, at the age of 71. He was born in Toledo, Ohio, and was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in The Presbyterian Church, USA, in 1961. He served as pastor in Waddington and Rochester, N.Y. and in Ramsey, N.J., and in the Springhill Pastoral Charge in the Presbytery of Pictou, N.S. At the time of his death, he was the Synod Pastor of the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. He was an elder at St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church, West Dublin, N.S.

He is survived by his wife, Ann, daughter Susan (Craig) and grandson, Stephen Rhodenizer, brother, Howard, and sister, Margaret Walther.

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Eastern Charlotte pastoral charge, NB (St. George; Pennfield). Rev. Dr. Paul Brown, 117 Germain St., Saint John, NB E2L 2E9; 506-634-1760; pbrown@biblesociety.ca.

Fredericton, St. Andrew's (youth and families ministry). Rev. Douglas Blaikie, 512 Charlotte St., Fredericton, NB E3B 1M2; 506-455-8220; minister@sapc.ca.

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Scarborough, St. Stephen's. Rev. Wayne Kleinstaub, 1301 Neilson Rd., Scarborough, ON M1B 3C2.

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Fly Super-Girl, fly

The handicapped are God's gift

My sister Steph wants to write a book about her seven-year-old daughter. The title would be *What Katie Didn't Do*. Why? Because Katie is what society would describe as "handicapped". She was born four months premature and spent rather a long time in hospital. She came home accompanied by a nursing team, to a house wired for oxygen. Katie had two strokes when she was tiny and is now classified as being autistic. Which means many things to many people. I'll offer one example.

A large hospital in England. My dad lies in bed, having also suffered a serious stroke. We all sit around and do the usual hospital things. Make jokes that aren't funny, pretend that everything is okay, be abnormally normal.

Katie walks in. No inhibitions, none of our silly preconceptions and prejudices. She climbs on the bed, gets under the blanket, puts her arms around her grandpa and cuddles up to him. And for the very first time since he was hit by fate's cruelty, my father smiles. A smile as wide as the world itself.

Katie achieved that. Because that is what Kates do. What the physically and mentally challenged do every day. Cut through the nonsense and the fear. They are in the frontline of the battle for civilization, teaching those of us who are without disability what honesty and simplicity are all about.

They are also the last people who have to fight for civil rights. Much as we congratulate ourselves on our liberal attitude towards those who are different, we regularly discriminate against the Kates of the world. Goodness me, her mum and dad have witnessed it for years. Even had to change church because their daughter was not accepted.

We know the sort of thing. Don't we? Oh boy, don't we.

"Of course you are welcome here, as long as you don't get in the way, speak too loudly or make any of us, the lucky ones, feel in any way uncomfortable. There's a ramp out there so you can get in, but once inside you better conform and shut up. We'll fine people if they leave their cars in handicapped parking spots but won't turn a hair if they talk to handicapped people as if they were dumb animals."

Katie can do jigsaws like Super-Girl. She starts not from the outside but from

not a fig for your life and anything in it.

I sit down and chat to my sister. Has it been difficult? "Yes, but also joyous beyond belief. A new adventure every day and a new path of discovery. Wouldn't change it for the world. Katie has made us all grow so much, taught us things we didn't know about ourselves, about what it really means to be human.

"Yes we cry, but yes we laugh. Actually being a mum to Katie is about saying yes to things. Yes to life, yes to love. Yes."

At which point Katie trots her way into our conversation, into our world.

"Being a mum to Katie is about saying yes to things. Yes to life, yes to love. Yes."

the middle. The complex shapes that so baffle us take form in her beautiful mind. Wonderful pictures come alive and speak. Speak in a way Katie cannot. Hey, not like Super-Girl. She is Super-Girl.

She doesn't have an extensive vocabulary, even though her parents have added speech therapist to their many other roles. But sometimes words aren't so important. When I arrive in England she walks straight up to me, grabs my hand and takes me to a chair. She crawls all over me, showing me total and unconditional trust and love.

It's true that she doesn't always look you in the eye and that her attention seems to wander and that she appears to be distracted. Unlike, of course, those people who always look you straight in the eye and seem to take in every word you say. Then forget your name and care

She wants to watch the video of *The Jungle Book*. She's seen it hundreds of times but that doesn't matter. It pleases her and she learns from it. Katie doesn't need expensive toys or fashionable luxuries. She's so much more than that. Perhaps so much more than us.

I increasingly believe that the handicapped are God's gift to us, to act as a catalyst to produce and provoke love in hearts that are sometimes hard and cold. I know Katie is that, along with so many other holy and Godly things.

Fly Super-Girl, fly Katie. And never care about those who would clip your wings. **R**

Michael Coren is a broadcaster, author and speaker. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com. You can join Michael in January 2005 on a tour of biblical Israel. Call 416-923-2003 or 1-800-262-6818, Ext. 9204.

called to wonder

Written by Erin Walton,
First Church, Edmonton

"Everyone has the right to be respected and the responsibility to respect others."
Sound familiar, huh? Jesus taught us this! Read Matthew 7:12 in case you forgot.

November 15 – 19, 2004, is Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.
Together, we can put an end to bullying.



If you are being bullied,
tell an adult.

Visit www.bullying.org
to sign up for a support
group, share your story
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And God Is With You!

Special Friend Game

Instead of using words that hurt, use words that heal! Try this activity at home, at school or in your Sunday School.

1. Give each child a shoebox with "I am Special" written on it.
2. Have each child draw a name from a hat of one of the other kids in the group.
3. Have each child write nice things about the child whose name they drew (compliments about their personality, talents, etc.) and place the card inside that person's shoebox.
4. Watch their faces light up!

*Dear God,
Please help those who are bullies to know
they are loved by you. Please help those who
are bullied to ask for help. Please help parents,
teachers and friends put an end to bullying.
Amen.*

You will find more learning activities online at:
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The Hidden Hunger, Part 2 • Christmas memories from away

PRESBYTERIAN Record

December 2004

A photograph of two young girls, likely altar girls, dressed in white robes and halos. They are holding lit candles and walking in a procession. The girl on the left is slightly behind the girl on the right. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is dark, and there is a rainbow visible on the left side of the image.

Inspired by God
Beautifying churches



*The board and staff of the
Presbyterian Record
wish you a
holy and happy Christmas*



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our covers

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Hospitality for strangers isn't optional

Sanctuary for refugees is in the news again, just as we're heading into the Christmas season. You can read the details on page 13 of this issue. At its heart is the ability of churches to provide a safe place for refugee claimants who are on the verge of deportation, but who believe — and the church in question believes — they have not been given a fair hearing and who likely also face personal danger or death if they return to their home country.

By tacit agreement, churches have been permitted by the federal government to offer sanctuary to such refugees for some time. The arrangement was based in part on the understanding that a role of churches is to be both the collective social conscience and to help those in our communities most in need.

Enter the new Minister of Immigration, Judy Sgro. For reasons unknown, the minister thought she could change all that with the simple declaration that it was no longer legal. Ms. Sgro clearly misjudged her target: churches (including the Presbyterian Church) have dug in their heels and, as this issue of the *Record* was going to press, had refused to sign on to a secret deal with the department that would limit the churches' ability to offer sanctuary.

What lies behind the right of sanctuary? Its roots are ancient but quite distinct from its current form. The right of sanctuary from the legal authorities has existed at various times and places throughout history, including the Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks and Romans. In England the right of sanctuary dates back to at least the 10th century.

Under English law, the right of sanctuary developed into the ability of someone accused of a crime, to seek refuge in a church for 40 days. After that they could give up (and almost certainly be executed, guilty or not) or "abjure the realm," which meant they forfeited all their rights and property to the Crown in return for safe (more in theory than practice) passage to a port from which they were to leave, never to return. In other words, sanctuary eventually led to death or deportation. Many people simply escaped and became outlaws. In 1623, James I abolished the practice.

It's interesting then that the modern concept of sanctuary is a mirror image of the medieval one. It is meant to provide safety from harm (and possibly death) in another country and to lead to immigration, not deportation.

Unfortunately, our immigration and refugee department is in a state of disarray. A long-overdue overhaul of the department

remains on the promise books. We need immigrants, we ought to be open to refugees and we have a department famous for being staffed at various levels by political hacks — a political payoff for partisan loyalty at the expense of taxpayers (literally) and many refugees and immigrants (figuratively). This is the real problem, not refugees, not any proven abuse, but a system that is unable (or politically unwilling) to cope and that puts vulnerable people at risk.

As Tom Reilly, general secretary of the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, has said: "To suggest that refugees are somehow dangerous, that they are a threat to security, foments an unacceptable prejudice against some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society."

It is nearly Christmas. The time when Christians recall the birth of the creator of existence itself as a human baby. Whose parents were forced to seek shelter in a barnyard while the mother delivered a baby the father didn't parent. Since the root of the word sanctuary is the Latin for holy, surely that animal-feeding trough was truly sanctuary.

The family was later forced to flee their country, becoming refugees in Egypt for a time, while Herod sought to kill Jesus through general infanticide in the region.

Opening our country to refugees is nothing other than an extension of the ancient practice of hospitality, still treasured in many parts of the world, such as the Middle East. So important was it that it became a part of Jewish law. It passed into Christianity, where it was so valued that in Dante's *Inferno* violating it is one of the worst sins possible. As the writer of Hebrews warns: "Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, because in doing so, some have entertained angels without knowing it."

Minister Sgro has sought refuge in the law. But the law is at best a blunt instrument, at worst, a donkey, as Dickens observed. And laws (which are agreements about how we want to govern ourselves) work best when all the norms are in place. Sometimes that doesn't happen. Justice always trumps the law — as courts themselves note occasionally. Besides, if God was a strict legalist, he wouldn't have joined himself with humanity and there wouldn't be a Christmas to observe.

David Harris

Warning against ecclesiastical hypothermia

I sometimes find myself taking exception to the views expressed in David Harris's editorials, however in his editorial Churches must change or be changed (October 2004) I found myself saying "amen" and "hallelujah" on several occasions (how un-Presbyterian!). I am pleased that voices are beginning to be heard expressing the desperate need for change within our denomination. Our churches seem to be made up primarily of folks with silver hair, wringing their hands and wondering where their children and grandchildren are and at the same time repeating over and over the seven last words of a dying church "we've never done it that way before".

There are churches, even some Presbyterian, that are overflowing with young families and young people and it seems to me that it would wise to examine what they are doing that so many of us are not.

The bottom line is that as a denomination we have to change the way we do things or it won't be too many generations before there won't be a Presbyterian Church in Canada. I would suggest that self-examination needs to begin right at the very top. It may just be that even the way we have governed for how many hundred years just isn't relevant any more. I'm not for a minute suggesting that we "throw the baby out with the bath water" but I think it is time to at least

change the bath water before the baby dies of ecclesiastical hypothermia.

Bill Boycott
Goderich, Ontario

Leadership has been dismal

Congratulations on your editorial content related to Facing certain change. In September 2003 you started off a great series with the subject Where Have They Gone which resulted in Graceview Presbyterian in Etobicoke, Ont., visiting Oro Presbyterian in the Orilla area and setting up a task force to deal with our aging congregation.

The articles in the October 2004 *Record*, Drawing The Line, Out With The Old, In With The New and Fresh Thinking For A Mounting Problem are very useful to congregations that are shrinking in numbers. In particular the use of consultants.

Leadership in dealing with this issue by our church leaders has been somewhat dismal but you have given us hope and encouragement to pass Christ's message on to the next generation and to the unchurched by facing the realities of the changes that have taken place in modern culture and life. Keep up the good work.

Bob Dobson
Etobicoke, Ontario

Hurray for term service

The October 2004 *Record* that I just finished reading was excellent, especially for those who are proponents of positive change in the Presbyterian Church.

Out With The Old, In With The New by Amy Sedlezky about the adoption of term service for elders by Glenview Church in Toronto was very interesting, but it still seems, from reading the article a second time, that change is not easy for that former Session...ie. *to avoid hurt feelings, the old session was kept abreast of all plans, decisions and changes.*

West Vancouver Church was very proactive in adopting term service for elders. We had a sub committee of session that came up with an excellent model for term service that was adopted by our Session in June 1998. It works very effectively, and has been a successful vehicle in attracting younger elders, for a six-year term.

Our church also has a team model of leadership, with a goal of as many people as possible each being on one team.

As a former Presbytery moderator (first woman), Synod moderator, and an active elder for 22 years, it was very easy for me to move along and give other people a chance to serve God as elders in our church. I have gained so many valuable experiences by serving on committees, Presbytery commissions, etc. etc. that there is no way I would want to rob another person of those experiences. Unlike Helen Oakes, I am happy to have hung up my skates, so I have more time to ice skate with my six year old grand daughter: I am happy to NOT know what is going on. I am happy to leave that to our Session...and just serve on the Pastoral Care Team.

Pontius' Puddle



Hurray for term service for elders...I hope that those reading the article who do NOT have term service for elders, will embark upon it soon. If you are interested, I would be happy to share our June 1998 document.

Jean Lawrence
West Vancouver, B.C.

The PCC cannot escape its Scottish origins

Regarding "Presbyterian history holds more surprises" by Stephen Hayes, October 2004.

The oldest Presbyterian congregation in Canada is not St. Andrew's, Lunenburg. The second oldest is in Nova Scotia, but not in Lunenburg. It is Truro (now First United), a Seceder congregation founded by Scots-Irish immigrants in the 1760s.

The history of St. Andrew's, Lunenburg could not be more different. For more than eighty years the Calvinist Reformed Congregation of Lunenburg, the church became a kirk in 1837. No one knows why the German Reformed Church allowed itself to be drawn into the social war of expansion between the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia (united Secession synod) and the much newer and smaller, but aggressive and acquisitive Kirk Synod, with which it had nothing in common. Christened St. Andrew's, the congregation followed its then minister into the Free Church in 1844.

Reformed and Presbyterian are not synonymous, and while the 'Dutch [Deutsch] Reformed Church' in Lunenburg was certainly Reformed it was not Presbyterian. Presbyterian congregations were founded only by Scots or Scots-Irish and so St. Andrew's, Quebec City, formed by military Scots in 1759, is indeed "the oldest established Presbyterian congregation in the country." All early Presbyterian congregations in Canada were Scots or Scots-Irish. However politically incorrect it may be, The Presbyterian Church in Canada cannot escape its ethnic and national origins in Scotland and the Kirk.

The historian of the Kirk in Nova Scotia, Rev. Alexander Maclean, writing about 1876 — and himself old enough to remember the Great Disruption — did

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not consider St. Andrew's, Lunenburg to be part of Presbyterian history at all. It was a kirk for barely six years before following its minister out of the Kirk. In those days congregations followed their ministers wherever they led. In 1925, however, things were different. Despite having a staunchly unionist and highly respected minister, St. Andrew's voted massively against the United Church. It was the largest congregation in Nova Scotia outside Pictou County to vote out. St. Andrew's, Lunenburg is therefore historically important, but not for the reason Dr. Hayes believes.

Barry Cahill
Halifax

Separation of young and old no good for church

In light of the all the discussion on the decline of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, I feel compelled to comment. I strongly believe the prevalent practice of holding our Christian Education programmes while the 'adults' worship has educated our children out of the Church. Though great things happen for our young people during this time, they are denied the joy of being with the WHOLE communion and the WHOLE communion is denied the joy that the young bring to worship. It has been my experience, once a child stops attending Sunday School, they do not start coming to worship nor do they become involved in other aspects of the life of the church.

I know there is much we need to do, within our individual churches and as a denomination, to be faithful to our calling and outreach. But we can start with two very simple things. We change our focus to Christian Education happening outside the worship hour so both worship and CE are places for ALL ages. And we become people, both individually and collectively, who welcome our children as our brothers and sisters, whose energy and innocence are gifts to the church. I believe, then, the Church will be the community She was called to be and a place where people will not only want to come, but they will not want to leave.

Ruth Cameron
New Glasgow, N.S.

Readers support PWS&D

Another fine edition of the *Record* has come into our home. Lots of good content — especially Brian Stewart's inspiring message to graduating students from Knox College, the item on Glenview's courageous organizational and leadership changes and the very helpful insert from our Education for Mission ministry. How regretful, therefore, that the 'wrapping' failed to reflect the energy and vision of our church. The photo is of profound grief, not growth, and the insert from World Vision is entirely inappropriate and indeed insulting to our Life and Mission Agency and especially Presbyterian World Service and Development. If costs were a factor in this misguided decision, please let your faithful readership know. We value the *Record* too much to see it arrive wrapped in glossy advertising.

David and Barbara Vincent,
Calgary

I was horrified to see that you would have included that gift catalogue from World Vision. I am a previous National board member for PWS&D. We have enough difficulty getting our congregations to support our mission agency without you people openly giving this obvious endorsement.

Joan Winwood,
Calgary, Alberta

I just received my copy of the *Record* today and was very disappointed to see the World Vision catalogue attached to it. Either the *Record* is a denominational magazine or it is not. If it is, then why does the *Record* accept advertising other organizations at the probable detriment of our own Presbyterian World Service and Development? PWS&D does not have the money, nor do we choose to spend it, on a huge advertising budget. We simply cannot compete with a huge organization like World Vision.

Rev. Kate Ballagh-Steeper
London, Ontario
PWS&D Committee member

As one who has strongly supported and encouraged members to support Presbyterians Sharing and Presbyterian World Service and Development, the two mission arms of our church, I find it disturbing that the *Record* would for the sake of the advertising dollar, include the World Vision advertisement document with the mailing of the *Record*. It completely overshadowed the wonderful back page ad for Presbyterians Sharing...

World Vision is presenting alternatives to Christmas gifts — we can do the same through Presbyterian World Service and Development.

We as Presbyterians in Canada have a wonderful opportunity to support partners around the world together through our two mission arms and the Women's Missionary Society. There is so much opportunity to do our mission within our own denomination. We do not need outside organizations to do it for us.

Wilma Welsh
Guelph, Ontario

Publisher's note: Both PWS&D and World Vision have been valued advertisers in the *Presbyterian Record*, a magazine published by the Presbyterian Record Inc., a separate company from the church and its organizations. As we state in our masthead (found on page 4 in this issue), advertising in the *Record* does not imply endorsement by either the *Record* or the church. That said, advertising is an important source of revenue for the *Record*. The magazine does not receive funding from the church and advertising helps keep subscription rates low. Nevertheless, the *Record's* board of directors have decided to put a temporary halt to fundraising advertising that might be perceived to conflict with national church-related programs while we investigate the issue more thoroughly.

David Harris
publisher and editor

The Presbyterian Record welcomes letters to the editor. Please include your name, home address and a daytime telephone number. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.



Friendship — a never ending reacquaintance

To grow fully is to change often

One of God's greatest gifts to us is the desire and ability to reach out and forge friendships. This is not always easy. "Hell is other people" wrote Jean-Paul Sartre. But as Christians we have been shown the example of sharing one another's burdens and of giving one's life for a friend. In Christ's friendship we learn one of life's toughest lessons — how to forgive. This month, as we write Christmas cards and select meaningful gifts, each of us will reflect on our friendships. Friends provide an excellent sounding board on how we are learning and growing. Through friendships we gauge our growth in faith.

Within the last month our church has lost two wonderful friends. The Reverend Dr Margaret MacNaughton and The Reverend Bob Fenton passed away in October. Bob was closely associated with Knox College for many years and Margaret left an indelible legacy for our church through the present Book of Common Worship.

At Margaret's memorial service I was impressed by the depth of the friendships that she had cultivated over the years. A niece and a close friend described Margaret as a person who listened, quietly introduced new topics for discussion but who also challenged. Above all things, Margaret respected her varied friends for their opinions and their worth as children of God. Margaret's views changed, not necessarily with or because of "the times", but because of increased insight and experience of God's Word and world. She made new friends across the generations. She welcomed the younger generation into her home and life and got to know and appreciate the challenges in their lives.



Friends Margaret MacNaughton, Marg Henderson, Lois Klempa and Druse Bryant have tea with The Famous Five in Ottawa. (see Lives Lived, page 46)

In the last years of his life, Bob Fenton drew upon his friendships at Knox Church, Oakville in order to raise funds for AIDS programmes of the Presbyterian Church. Building upon his experiences of encouraging friendships through the Knox-Ewart Alumni Association, he gathered an extraordinary team of people together to learn about this scourge and then become committed to do something about it. Bob met each person as a friend. He rallied those friends to take on tasks that would bind them together while challenging them to look at life and life's problems in new ways. He was precise, responsible and accountable, offering those gifts to his circle of friends.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), the English poet, critic and lexicographer, wrote, "If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in constant repair". In the context of "keeping a friendship in constant repair", I believe

that making "new acquaintance" means renewing acquaintance with one's friends. Change is a constant in everyone's life. People are constantly evolving, and thus they must re-connect with those they care about. The connection must be maintained. John Henry Newman stated it in these words, "To live is to grow. To grow is to change. To grow fully is to change often."

Former Moderator John Congram wrote in *This Presbyterian Church of Ours*, "The church is not a group of like-minded people. The Rotary Club is for that end." God has given each of us a mind that absorbs so many new wonders each day and we are called to share the joy of that journey with our friends. Each human journey is different. We give honour to God when we show respect for one another's journey. It is then, within the crucible of Christian friendship, that we have the freedom to share life's trials, joys and perplexities. Margaret MacNaughton and Bob Fenton showed me that friend-



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- **HAWAII CRUISE**

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- **HOLLAND & BELGIUM WATERWAYS**

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ships should be challenging. They should expand our horizons. A true friend is one who accepts another unconditionally, forgives when they are offended, and embraces the possibility of seeing the world in a different way through the eyes of their friend. Christian friendships within the church should be lively, engaging, challenging, mind-expanding. It is fun, especially in the season of Christmas, to make re-acquaintance with all one's friends.

Jesus Christ journeys and shares with us the distance one should go for one's friends. It is easy for most to embrace a smiling adorable baby Jesus. However we must also re-acquaint ourselves with our friendship with Jesus the teacher, and Son of God as well. The lessons of a friendship with Jesus include not just those of his birth but all of what he taught and shared with us throughout his sojourn on earth. His friendship leads to a cross and onward to a resurrection Sunday.

As you draw up your Christmas card list and send greetings — electronic and paper — it would be my hope that you include joys and sorrows and how you have seen God working in your life. As a church we remember Margaret and Bob and many others who have walked and shared with us as friends. For the gift of their friendship we give thanks. From childhood's finest book on friendship, *The Little Prince*, we learn that describing a friend "is to make sure that I shall not forget him. To forget a friend is sad." At Christmas let us re-acquaint ourselves with Christ, our friend, which serves to increase our joy. Merry Christmas to you, your family and your friends.

Link Fee

Moderator's itinerary

December 3 or 4

St. Andrew's Calgary, AB

December 5 (morning)

St. Paul's, Eckville, AB

December 5 (day)

St. Andrew's, Innisfail, AB

December 8

St. Andrew's, Toronto, ON

December 12

Ghanaian, Toronto, ON

10th anniversary

New Agers are potential disciples of Jesus

"The New Age movement is a mirror of what we lack in church, a balanced spirituality that cares not for only the soul but the well-being of the whole person," Ole Skjerbaek Madsen told the Forum for Evangelization in Bangkok.

Christians should stop condemning clairvoyants, tarot card readers and other New Age practitioners, said the Danish Lutheran pastor. "There is a very big urge for spiritual direction in the world today, but it is not being found in the church," noted Madsen.

About 1800 participants met in Thailand at the invitation of the international movement, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

Madsen, who since 2000 has been a mission pastor in Denmark working on bridge-building between the Church and New Age spiritualities, said one practical way of forming dialogue was to be present at New Age fairs and festivals.

"Many of us hire booths and engage the New Age seekers there. New Age practitioners suddenly see they are not just channeling a force through a crystal stone from a non-personal source but rather as a gift of God," he reported. "Suddenly some of these people whom the Church thought were enemies working for the 'dark side' are now co-workers for the kingdom of God and the healing of people for whom they inwardly pray."

"Tarot cards can be used to help people see how God reveals himself in our life," said Madsen. "The big challenge for the church is not seeing devils everywhere but people as potential disciples of Jesus Christ."

He said: "Every person I meet, even a Satanist, is a potential disciple of Jesus Christ. I must meet that person as such, seeing him through the eyes of God and not the eyes of my own judgement."

Michael Mettason, ENI

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan extends helping hand

Japan is receiving aid from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) after an earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale hit Japan's west coast on Oct. 23. Seven people near Kashiwazaki were killed and over 700 were injured. The earthquake crumbled buildings, derailed a train and ruined roads. Electricity and telephone services were interrupted, and water and sewage pipes burst. The damage worsened the destruction already accumulated during Japan's worst typhoon season in twenty years.

The PCT enjoys a close relationship with the United Church of Christ in Japan. It quickly sent US\$10,000 to the affected area and encouraged congregations to take up special offerings to further their aid.

Japan is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries, as its islands lie within the Ring of Fire — an area of earthquake hot spots that surrounds the Pacific Ocean. The country's greatest earthquake occurred in 1923. Measuring 7.9, it sparked the Tokyo fire, killing 143,000 people. A 1995 earthquake killed 5,500 people and measured 6.9.

Taiwan Church News

The Grinch wins one; loses another

Christmas holidays are a welcomed reinstatement in India, while a threat of canceling the holiday in South Africa is a new possibility. India's new federal government, led by the Indian National Congress party, brought back the century-old holiday a year after the Hindu nationalist party did away with it.

The holiday applies to the 933 schools controlled by the federal government. The decision was praised by the National Council of Churches in India which represents 29 Orthodox and Protestant churches. Ipe Joseph, the council's general secretary, said the Oct. 21 decision from a secular government is positive and will "help promote respect for all religions."

South Africa's government is trying to decide which holidays to scrap — with Christmas being one of the

possibilities. The country's 14 statutory holidays cost the economy \$600 million each, according to business leaders. Trade unions take the opposite approach, arguing for more days off.

The task force charged with the responsibility of deciding which holidays go and which ones stay, said the safety of Christmas is not guaranteed and all holidays are being considered equally. However, they realize the uproar that such a cancellation would incite.

Christians make up three-quarters of South Africa's population. The decision to remove some holidays was originally motivated by religion. The Asian minority cried discrimination over Christian holidays being statutory while Hindu and Muslim days were not.

ENI and The Globe and Mail

Dr. Dutcher-Walls joins VST

Something quite special happened at the over-flowing Epiphany Chapel on the warm late afternoon of September 21st. The music was joyous, the spoken words challenging, the response enthusiastic.

The Presbytery of Westminster, supported by the presence and participation of Western Han-Ca Presbytery and the faculty, friends and students of VST, inducted Rev. Dr. Patricia Dutcher-Walls as Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at Vancouver School of Theology.

Participants in the service included: Rev. Terry Hibbert, Moderator of Westminster Presbytery; Rev. Dr. Harry Maier, Professor of New Testament; Archbishop Douglas Hambidge, Chancellor of VST; Ms. Sophie Rolland, VST student; Rev. Alfred Lee, Moderator, Western Han-Ca Presbytery; Rev. Dr. Wendy Fletcher, Vice Principal Academic and Dean at VST; Ms. Mary Fontaine, VST graduate; Rev. Grant Wilson, Clerk of Westminster Presbytery; Rev. Dr. Stephen Farris, Professor of Homiletics; Rev. Dr. Ted Siverns, Director of Presbyterian Formation; and Rev. Dr. Ken MacQueen, Principal of VST.

Dr. Farris preached from Deuteronomy 6 and Colossians 3, We Will Tell Each Generation. Rev. Dr. Gerald Hobbs



and the VST Choir led the congregation in hymns from *The Book of Praise*.

Dr. Dutcher-Walls has joined and strengthened a faculty that has a strong Presbyterian presence and that appears to be the largest faculty in the history of the school. Her colleagues include an ecumenical faculty of Anglican, United and Lutheran denominations as well as Presbyterian.

Following the induction, VST hosted a reception for Dr. Dutcher-Walls while the two presbyteries enjoyed a dinner hosted by St. Andrew's Hall. The evening concluded with both presbyteries conducting their regular business meetings — though perhaps with more of a lilt and up-beat tone than on other occasions.

Ted Siverns



New Youth In Mission Co-ordinator

Reuben St. Louis grew up in the Presbyterian Church all his life and his mother, Nan St. Louis has been a Presbyterian minister for 30 years. While completing his BA in Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo, Reuben held leadership positions in PYPS as convenor, at Camp Kintail as a Leader in Training resource counsellor and at Knox Presbyterian, Waterloo as a youth leader. After university, Reuben was hired as a youth pastor at Emmanuel Presbyterian in Nottawa, Ont. where he still works and lives. It was a trip to Curacao that sparked his interest in mission and over the past year he has made mission a central theme for the youth at Emmanuel. In addition to the youth ministry at Emmanuel, Reuben is the North American Young Adult representative on the Caribbean and North American Council for Missions. He is very excited about being the YIM Co-ordinator and the opportunity to continue using his talents and skills for The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Churches reject minister's secret proposal on refugees

Canada's churches are protecting their right to offer sanctuary by rejecting a confidential proposal by Immigration Minister Judy Sgro. The deal would have allowed them to choose a dozen failed refugee claimants a year for a second chance at staying in the country. The churches are in new negotiations with the minister. "The churches would not want to be seen as being given any special privilege," said Rev. Richard Fee, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. "We want to work within the wider Canadian context and make sure the present cases are brought to a quick resolution."

Church representatives voiced their disapproval of the proposal outside a meeting of the House of Commons immigration committee on Nov. 2. They said they were not about to do the work of the immigration department, acting as a refugee appeals tribunal that was promised by former immigration minister Denis Codere but never established. "The big emphasis is the appeal process and we're still standing behind that," said Mr. Fee. He said the churches want to discuss the fact that a law was made to allow appeals but was not implemented. "We want to tell the government what we're thinking."

Two years ago, Mr. Codere announced an appeal process was to be introduced under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. That the fate of each refugee hopeful is decided by only one person makes the absence of an appeal even more inexcusable.

Because of the government's lack of protection of potential refugees, churches sometimes offer failed claimants sanctuary, effectively protecting them from being deported. Until last winter, when Quebec police stormed a United Church to remove Algerian refugee claimant, Mohamed Cherfi, the practice of sanctuary went relatively unchallenged. The friendly, informal partnership of churches and the immigration department ended when Ms. Sgro accused churches of offering a "back door" to Canada.

Under the failed proposal, the chosen cases would have been given an independent review and, within 10 days, the immigration minister would decide if the appellant could stay in Canada on humanitarian

grounds. Permanent residency would be granted if the church sponsored the refugee.

The proposal was an attempt by Ms. Sgro to deal with the issue of churches offering sanctuary by pushing them to re-examine their decisions to grant such protection. On Sept. 29, she met with representatives from Presbyterian, Anglican, United and Roman Catholic churches.

The practice of offering sanctuary is a well-established one and is a service churches don't take lightly. Each potential person is screened closely before a church will open its doors.

The refugee-determination system is up for review early next year.

Amy MacLachlan, with files from The Globe and Mail



Judy Sgro, Immigration Minister

Photo by Art Babych

Clergy want to join union

Several United Church clergy are hoping to join the Canadian Auto Workers Union. The country's biggest blue-collar union has agreed to accept them. Plans are in the works to unionize about 4,000 ministers from Ontario and British Columbia churches.

Buzz Hargrove, union president, said the ministers have a "legitimate need" to become a part of the union and although clergy form a unique group, the two sides share similar challenges.

Unionizing is not something that has arisen in our church at all

About 2,000 Anglican priests and other church staff in England have been unionized for 10 years, and the Canadian branch has said its clergy are welcome to join in. The need to do so would seem minimal however, since Anglican clergy enjoy the safeguard of bishops, who can intercede in conflicts between priests and congregations.

The idea of joining a union has yet to permeate other denominations in Canada. "Unionizing is not something that has arisen in our church at all," said Rev. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk of the PCC. "It just hasn't been an issue."

The request came from 30 United Church ministers who said they need protection from abusive parishioners. They argued that the church's responses to their complaints have been inadequate in the past and a union will help hold the church accountable.

The United Church of Canada issued a statement on its website, reminding readers that the request is a grassroots movement, originated by a small group of clergy that doesn't necessarily reflect the national church or its governing bodies.

With files from Reuters and Torstar

Bush born again with evangelical support

According to exit-polls 20 per cent of the 120 million Americans who voted in the November 2nd election call themselves Christian evangelicals or 'born again'. Of that number, 75 per cent voted for President George W. Bush.

The Rev. Rob Schenck, president of the National Clergy Council, a Christian advocacy group, who is a board member of the Evangelical Church Alliance, said: "This election demonstrates that Democratic Party leaders have moved far away from the moral consensus in America. If they are to reclaim political relevancy, they will need to re-examine their positions on all the major moral issues including the sanctity of human life, the sanctity of marriage and the public acknowledgement of God."

Morality was cited as the principal concern of nearly a quarter of the electorate, the CNN network reported, while polls by The Associated Press (AP) news agency in a dozen "swing states" showed the state of moral values was just as important to voters as economic worries.

There was wide speculation that Bush's victory could be attributed to a strong turnout by his evangelical Christian base of support, particularly in the 11 states that approved state constitutional amendments prohibiting same-sex marriage.

But Robert Edgar, the general secretary of the US National Council of Churches, the country's largest grouping of Christian churches and agencies, said the election "confirmed that we are a divided nation, not only politically but in terms of our interpretations of God's will".

"Regardless of who leads our country, the agenda of the church must always respond faithfully to the Bible's timeless mandate to minister to the poor, the marginalised and the outcast; and to be seekers and makers of peace," Edgar said. "In this quest for the common good, we will contribute to the healing of the

nation, and of the family of nations."

The last two Democrats elected to the presidency — Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 — were both southerners and Baptists, and some Democrats expressed concern that in order to win the presidency again, their party needed figures comfortable with religious faith and who could appeal to evangelical voters.

The Internet site Beliefnet said Bush did well in capturing Catholic votes

against Kerry, who was the first Catholic presidential nominee since 1960. It said Kerry won 50 per cent of the Catholic vote to Bush's 49 per cent, according to exit polls.

Nationally, Catholics who attended church weekly voted 53 per cent to 45 per cent for Bush. In Ohio, a key "swing state" that Democrats hoped to win, the margin was 62 per cent to 38 per cent.

Chris Herlinger ENI, with files from Torstar News Service

Churches defend Mother Nature

Wanted: political leaders to tend God's garden

Christians are taking action to protect the environment. Newspaper ads, prayer petitions and street marches are their chosen vehicles. An ecumenical voice is their great advantage.

In the United States, the National Council of Churches placed an advertisement in six state newspapers declaring, WANTED: Political Leaders To Tend God's Garden. The ad asks people to pray for better environmental protection by political leaders and to sign a petition urging their leaders to act. Water pollution, forest protection and climate change were listed as important issues. The ad also urged individuals to do their part in protecting the environment.

According to Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, the NCC's general secretary, the ads were a response to growing environmental squalor and a lack of political action to protect it.

In Britain, Operation Noah encourages supporters to sign a covenant asking the government to lead the way in climate change, and reduce personal activities that harm the environment.

Hundreds of campaigners marched

through the streets of central England in October to kick-off Operation Noah. Backed by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, which represents all the countries' Christian denominations, the march converged on Coventry Cathedral. Dr. David Hallman, coordinator of the World Council of Churches' climate change program, said the issue is one of international and inter-generational justice.

Both campaigns came just before Russia's decision to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The 1997 agreement on climate change requires adherents to reduce or restrict greenhouse gas emissions by 2012 by an average of five per cent below their 1990 levels. The U.S., which accounted for 36 per cent of global gas emissions in 1990, pulled out of the treaty in 2001. Since approval of the 55 countries that accounted for at least 55 per cent of global emissions in 1990 was needed, the treaty couldn't take effect. Russia's decision tipped the scales back in favour of the treaty.

Canada has committed itself to Kyoto. It must reduce emissions by 240 million tonnes a year to comply with the requirements.

ENI

Churches fight poverty around the world

Church groups and alliances around the world are working with governments and international agencies to fight the scourge of global poverty.

In Canada, KAIROS, an alliance of Canadian churches, urged finance minister Ralph Goodale to lead the G7, a collection of wealthy Western nations, to cancel the debt of poor countries.

John Mihevc, of KAIROS, noted that each year African countries pay back almost US\$13 billion to the IMF and World Bank — more than they receive in development assistance. “Debt cancellation must be complete,” Mihevc said, adding that it should, “allow countries to set and follow their own national development strategies”.

Blaise Morand, chairman of a social affairs commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote to finance minister Goodale, pleading for Canada’s support in canceling all the multilateral debts of the poorest countries in the world.

Morand wrote, “Canada showed it can move very quickly when we forgave US\$612 million in debts owed by Iraq. Your September 22, 2004 announcement to cancel the relatively modest US\$7.34 million in debt owed to Canada from Senegal, Ghana and Ethiopia, was also appreciated.”

And Erich Weingartner wrote in the October/November issue of *Canada Lutheran* magazine: “How does the World Bank choose its beneficiaries? There is a plan to grant post-war Iraq an estimated US\$80-90 billion in debt relief. If implemented ... the international community will provide almost three times as much debt relief to one country in less than a year than to the world’s 27 poorest countries over the past seven years combined.”

“How can we claim to follow Jesus if we are not prepared to work to achieve his gospel of good news for the poor?”

said Njongonkulu Ndungane, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, launching a global campaign to alleviate poverty. “When Christians work with one another, united across nationalities and races, across rich and poor, across men, women and children, we have an enormously powerful and influential voice.”

The “Micah Challenge”, is a joint effort of The World Evangelical Alliance

Poverty reduction is a trickle-down approach that implies that some people are expected to remain poor

and the United Nations. It seeks to mobilize Christians around a series of development goals sought by the 191 UN member states.

The Millennium Development Goals — which include halving the rate of “absolute global poverty” by 2015 — cover concerns like economic and hunger issues and also education, gender equality, the environment and HIV/AIDS.

Rev. Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, is working with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group on the same issue. “When listening to those cries, including those coming from the growing number of inhabitants of the ‘global South’ within the council’s constituency, certain concrete concerns,

among them the international debt, can be clearly heard.”

A Kenyan Methodist and the first African to head the world church body, Kobia recognized that “the World Bank’s vision of a poverty-free world resonates well with a substantial portion of the council’s analysis.” But he expressed concern that “poverty reduction, rather than eradication, is a trickle-down approach to development that implies that some people are expected to remain poor.”

James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank Group warned that the world was at a “crisis point” and said it was not facing up to issues such as armament proliferation, fairness in trade and clinching peace. “We are high on rhetoric and low on delivery.”

Kobia said the WCC was also “troubled by assumptions of growth without limit, and neglect of the ramifications of growth as regards issues of equity and the ecology”. He said the world church grouping remained “profoundly concerned about the issue of human rights and justice in regard to the acknowledgement of voices and apportionment of votes in the governing bodies of the Bretton Woods institutions [the IMF and World Bank].”

Wolfensohn answered that when it came to representation on the board of the World Bank, churches should speak to board members like the South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, who is heading an investigation into its representation.

ENI

Watch For “Reachout For Life!”

With Presbyterian host Dr. Larry Brice

On Family Friendly TV - CTS - Sunday 2:30 pm (ET)

“Featuring contemporary Christian leaders”





Unlocking the Kingdom

A youth minister asks teens why they won't enter a church

by Ty Ragan

Why is it so hard to bring community youth into the church? It's not like there's a stigma — there is no more razzing for attending church than doing anything else in your teens. So what is it about the church that scares young people away? In my years of youth ministry I've discovered the church can be its own worst enemy when it comes to taking the Gospel to the street.

Recently, I went to a local Starbucks to do some reading and ended up chatting with different teens I've seen around the 'hood. Some were former youth of mine and some were street kids. I asked why they won't come into church. The resounding answer was that they were unwanted. These kids immediately felt unwelcome when they entered different churches.

As a teenager, I remember showing up to a youth group with friends one night and being informed I was going to hell. I was told never to come back. At another church, my friend was advised not to bother bringing an outsider like me to the meetings. The churches by our high school, it seemed, spent more time chasing us off than talking to us. Even as a youth pastor, I've fought to keep a teen in youth group when the church wanted him out because he lived in a group home.

I was shocked by the response of one girl I talked to: "I can't afford church."

Her local church charges for youth group. It's an often overlooked problem: church is overpriced for some teens. These kids wanted to go to church but, as they explained, they felt they didn't belong. "I smoke," they said. "I drink and do drugs." "I'm promiscuous." "I live on the street." "I might be gay." "I stole once." "I don't know how to read the

human beings to the mix. Then the theory doesn't always hold.

I am optimistic every once in a while. When I wonder if my church will go outwards, I look at my city — my neighbourhood alone has close to thirty churches. When my friends talk about the violence around us and question why God doesn't do anything, I feel He is

One day, we will see churches brimming with youth.

One day, there will be no doubts about acceptance in church.

One day, the doors will be unlocked.

Bible." "I'm a prostitute." "I can't pray." "I don't know when it is." "I'm too poor." "They think I'm bad." "I have piercings." "I have tats [tattoos]." "The door was locked when I went."

The door was locked when I went? That comment struck me deeply. Churches, literally locked up tight, live in fear of property vandalism. But those dead bolts aren't the only thing acting as locks on the Kingdom of God. All of those reasons kids gave for not attending church are barring the doors. Because you are pierced/gay/tattooed/illiterate, you aren't allowed inside. You won't be accepted.

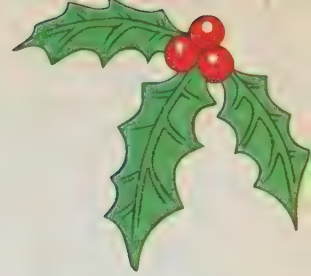
Every night I pray for an opportunity to reach out to the community. I know, in theory, that God wants that to happen. And it's a great theory until you add real

doing something. We're here — the generation that turned away from the church in our own youth and then turned back. Now the question is: are we willing to help these kids or are we just going to keep the doors locked?

As I said, I'm hopeful. One day, I will see churches brimming with youth that would normally be on the streets — hurting, running and trying to find whatever they can to fill the void. One day, there will no longer be doubts about acceptance in church. One day, the doors will be unlocked. **R**

Ty Ragan is the youth minister at Centennial Presbyterian Church, Calgary. He was a lay minister at a hub parish for the R.C.'s World Youth Day and has been involved for five years in street ministry @ Calgary's Mustard Seed.

Christmas in summertime



By Erin Woods

Last Christmas was my first experience away from Canada. New Zealand's summer weather made the decorated trees, wreaths and lights in the stores seem a joke, and I missed the true snow of Northern Ontario. Caroling in the evening didn't seem right without the cold and darkness, and the tradition of Christmas lights on houses was utterly pointless; the daylight lingered until most people were ready for bed. I thought longingly of skiing and snowshoeing, snowmen and snowball fights, and hot chocolate warming chilled bodies. How could Christmas be without winter?

Christmas eve was heralded by a blazing sun in Christchurch, the city where we were staying. The news worried about a firebug working in the tinder-dry area, lack of rainfall aiding the destruction. Christmas spirit wasn't exactly in high reserve. As we drove through Christchurch for midnight mass at the Anglican cathedral, I watched the people we passed. I was surprised to see, on Christmas Eve, a family leaning against the window of a downtown store, dull boredom showing in their eyes. Teenagers in groups of three and four wandered around an outdoor mall, heedless of the Christmas season.

"I've never been downtown in a big city on Christmas eve before," my mother commented. "I expected it to be quieter."

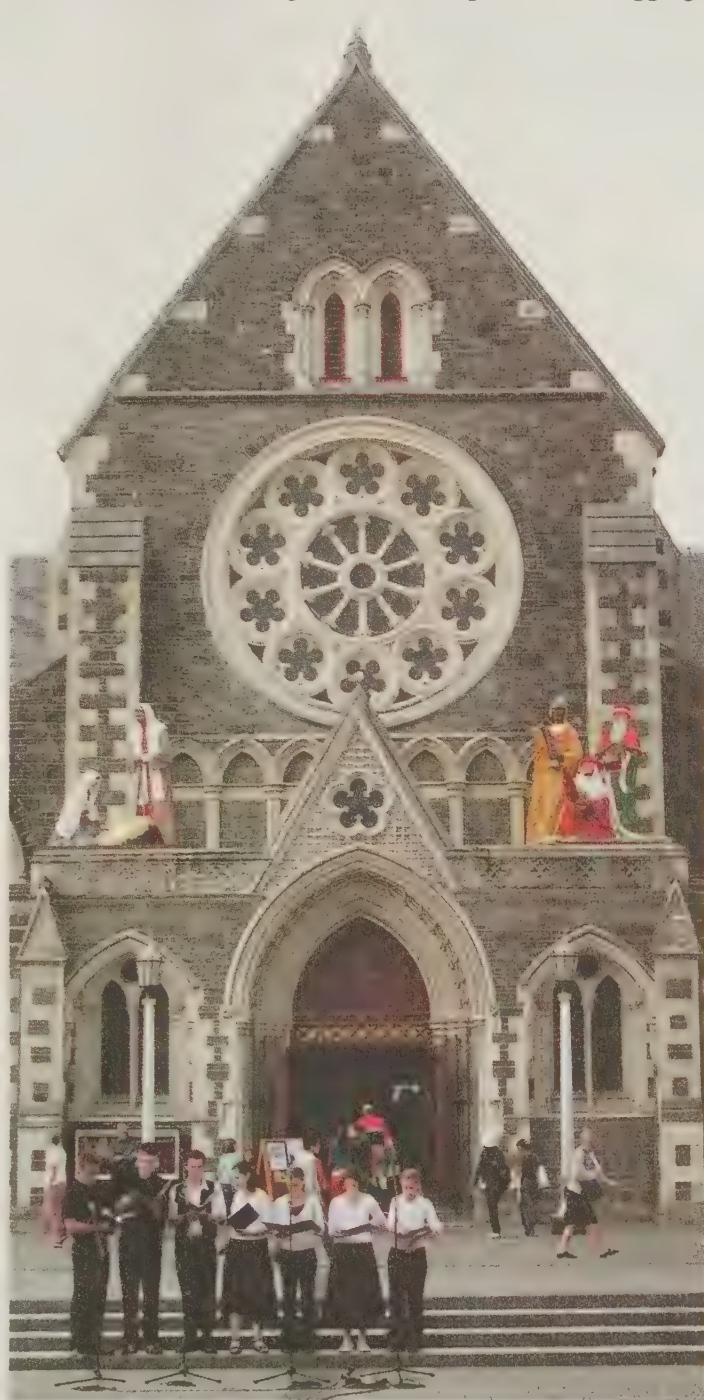
I nodded silently, watching a man in an orange vest changing the bags in public rubbish bins. What a job for this night.

A young man ran through a square, kicking a shoe before him. A young woman limped behind, laughing as she chased him. A youth climbed a war memorial monument, his buddies standing around and egging him on.

When we got out of the car in Cathedral Square, the bells were ringing. Real church bells. Well, if I missed Canada's snow and cold and my own little Presbyterian church, at least I got to hear real church bells for Christmas. Inside, people from all over the world filled the seats, spilling out into the aisles and standing in the back. They outnumbered the native Kiwis nearly five to one. The carols were beautiful, sung in so many different voices. When the service was over we smiled goodbye to our new acquaintances: Korea on one side, San Diego on the other. The congregation filtered out into the balmy summer night air.

As we drove back to our rented cottage, a traffic light halted us near a bus stop. It was after Midnight, but there were two small children waiting with their mother. As I watched, the bus pulled up and a man got off. They ran out to meet him, laughing and hugging and crying, each telling him a million different stories at once.

'There,' I thought, forgetting for a time my daydreams of ice and snow and quilts by a wood fire. 'This is what Christmas is about.' **R**



Christchurch Cathedral in New Zealand on Christmas Eve.

Erin Woods, 15, lives in Corbeil, Ontario.

The gift of giving...

... or, how to stuff a stocking

So many loved ones, cherished friends, special someones. So many options, screaming at you in the mall, from the t.v., on the radio, all the time, all month long. So little time. Here are a few suggestions to ease the stress during this season of giving and maybe even getting.

Sing 'em a song:

We Are the Future, You Are the Answer, various artists — A compilation of 12 songs including Andrea Bocelli, Alicia Keyes, Norah Jones and Josh Groban. All proceeds support We Are the Future; an aid effort that helps children living in nations plagued by conflict. Available at www.starbucks.com. \$12.95.

Genius Loves Company, Ray Charles — A dozen duets performed by Ray Charles and various Grammy-winning artists including Diana Krall, Elton John, James Taylor, Willie Nelson and B.B. King. Available at Starbucks. \$20.95.

A Very Special Christmas — The fifth in a series, this CD features contemporary musicians such as Sheryl Crow, Dido and Jon Bon Jovi singing their favourite seasonal tunes. Proceeds go to raise awareness for the Special Olympics. Available at Chapters, Indigo and most music stores. \$21.99.

Read 'em a tale:

These books are available at the PCC bookroom. Call 1-800-619-7301 or email bookroom@presbyterian.ca to order.

Sarah Laughed: Modern Lessons from the Wisdom & Stories of Biblical Women — Author Vanessa Ochs, a Judaic scholar, has brought to life biblical matriarchs and shown them to be good role models for women today. \$35.95.

Epiphany: One Family's Christmas Discovery, by Paul McCusker — A father's death brings understanding and peace to his family. A modern-day parable with a heart-warming message. \$20.25.

Lighted Windows: Advent Reflections for a World in Waiting — Daily meditations for the 37 days of advent by popular spirituality author, Margaret Silf. Used individually or with a group, each reflection includes a scripture passage, commentary, spiritual exercise and prayer. \$19.99.

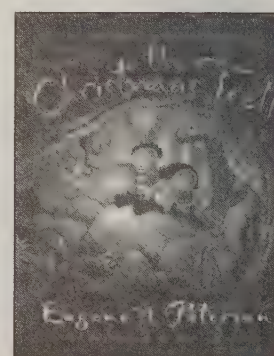
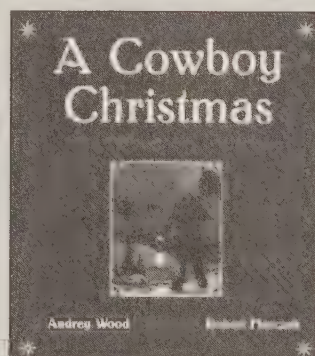
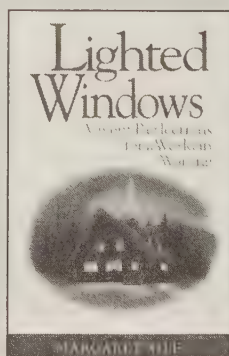
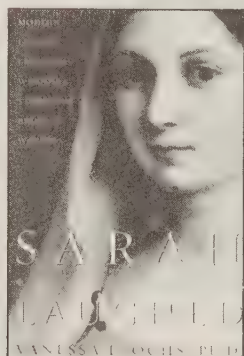
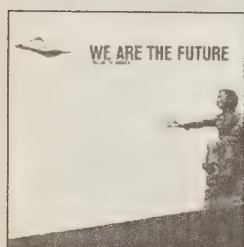
The Spirituality of Wine, by Tom Harpur — a stunning hardcover suitable for the coffee table, Harpur explores the connection between wine and spirituality from ancient times to today. \$46.95.

A Cowboy Christmas: The Miracle at Lone Pine Ridge, by Audrey Wood — The pioneer West is the setting for this Christmas story, where generosity and faith make a miracle happen. \$12.50.

The Christmas Troll — Eugene Peterson, the writer of *The Message*, weaves a wonderful tale about the blessings of unexpected gifts from God. \$22.99.

The Stable that Bob Built, by Cindy Kenney — this *Veggie Tales* version of the Christmas story will charm young readers. \$13.99.

The Purpose Driven Life deluxe journal — this leather-bound journal is the perfect companion to the best-selling book by Rick Warren. Includes Scripture references, excerpts from the book, and room to write personal reflections. Available at Blessings Christian Marketplace. \$22.99.



without breaking a sweat

Get 'em sharing with other Presbyterians:

Presbyterian World Service and Development. There is no greater gift than the gift of life, the gift of hope, the gift of joy. For the gift that keeps on giving, why not make a donation to PWS&D in someone else's name? They have Gift of Hope cards that can be sent directly to the donor. Donations help relief and development work in countries hit by disaster, or struggling to survive in the midst of ongoing difficulty. Five dollars supports immunization for a child in rural India, \$10 buys beans for one meal for 300 children in an orphan centre in Malawi, \$75 helps a woman attend literacy classes in a slum community in India. Call 1-800-619-7301 or email pwsd@presbyterian.ca to find out more.

The PCC Annual Calendar. Stunning photographs adorned with meditation verses. And, you can write on it. Hang it in the kitchen and keep track of your busy schedule.

The Presbyterian Record. (You can't blame us for trying.) Never a dull issue as the *Record* tells the monthly story of The Presbyterian Church in Canada; and its environs.

Make 'em something:

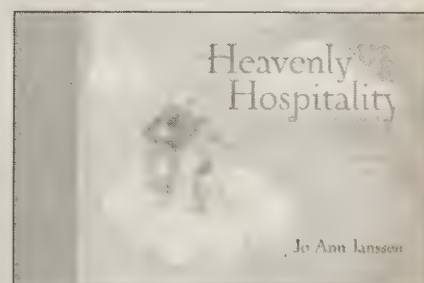
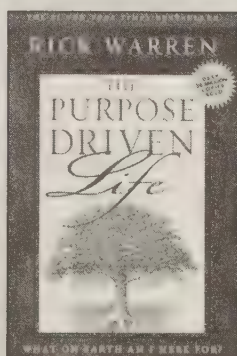
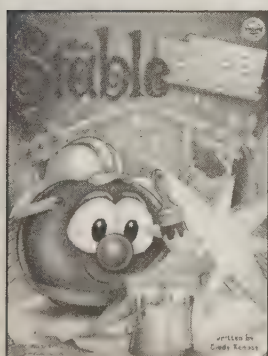
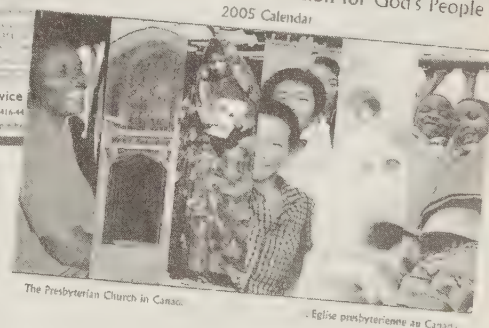
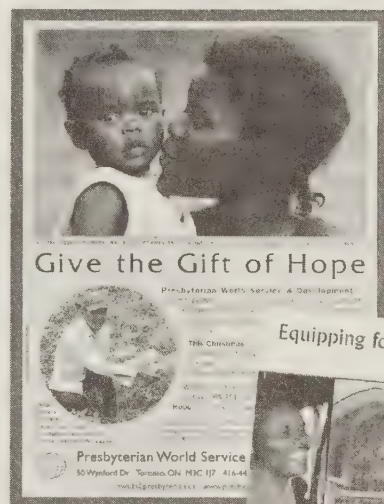
God's Good Gifts: A Scrapbooking Bible Study for Women's Groups, by Sherri Harris. The third book in a popular Scripture Scrapbook series, this one has 12 sessions designed to help women create a scrapbook of their spiritual journey. Available at the PCC bookroom. \$21.69.

Heavenly Hospitality, by Jo Ann Janssen — An entertainer's handbook for the holidays and beyond, this book encourages a warm, open heart for hospitality and reminds readers of the

importance of a good host to God. Available at the PCC bookroom. \$19.99.

Paint-your-own-pottery stores across the country offer a range of plates, bowls, figurines, etc. to decorate using a variety of colours and glazes. With a little guidance from staff, you can quickly become a master, and add a favourite psalm or inspirational message on a mug or serving platter. Check the Yellow Pages for a studio near you.

With a Merry Christmas from the staff at the *Presbyterian Record*.





The Christmas Angel

Memories of an English nativity play

By Janet Astle

I was a shy child, terrified of performing in any public arena. Perhaps that is why the vicar's wife, Mrs. Meynall, volunteered me to be the Archangel Gabriel, for the annual nativity play at Leamington Hastings Church in Britain many years ago. Mrs. Meynall didn't so much speak with people as at them. I gingerly picked up the phone, held it slightly away from my ear, and listened. She hung up before my tentative "But..." could resonate down the line.

On the appropriate evening a miserable gang of would be angels and shepherds huddled against the frigid church building. It should be noted that the indoor temperature of English churches is inversely proportional to their age. The foundations of the Leamington Hastings Church was shortly to celebrate its 1000th anniversary; the building, though younger, was still relatively aged. Mrs. Meynell swished amongst us divesting us of our warm coats and started the chaotic process of getting each child into the correct costume. I was dressed in a classic angel outfit of old sheet, foil covered wings and gold tinsel.

My wings, befitting their elevated status, were enormous. I was to lead my jittery band of angels up the central aisle and mount the narrow steps, which spiraled around an immense pillar, to the

pulpit. But, the wings were too wide. After a certain amount of rustling and a little tearing of fabric I found I could slither sideways, with my back against the rough stone pillar, up the steps. Once there, I found I was too short to see over the ornate bible stand and my wings got stuck in the pulpit carvings. A helpful parent volunteered to bring a wooden orange crate. Darn, I was hoping I would be able to hide in the pulpit for the entire play. The remainder of the rehearsal con-

tinued with the usual confusion amongst the tiny angels; the desperate need for a bathroom by one of the shepherds (this being an English church the nearest bathroom was a full graveyard and field away); and a Mary who kept dropping the baby Jesus doll.

The evening of the Nativity play sun-set and, with stomach churning, I was driven to my doom. We entered the dark cavern of the church and donned the damp costumes. I was about to lead the



procession down the aisle when Mrs. Meynall boomed "Janet, glasses!" It appears that while it is perfectly all right for the archangel to wear a sheet and gold tinsel, she cannot wear glasses. I was immediately plunged into a myopic blur and the subsequent dimming of all the lights left me working almost entirely by feel. I was also given a horn and a censer which kept going out, leaving only a heavy ball on three chains.

The play began and I lead the procession down the aisle accompanied by great clanking of the chains. The congregation looked puzzled. As rehearsed, I felt my way to the pulpit, twisted sideways, wings catching momentarily on the hymn board, and, crabwise, felt my way gingerly up the pitch black stairs. At the top I stubbed my toe on the orange crate and the bang from the pulpit echoed around the cavernous space. Meanwhile, the tiny angels were being pulled into place and given candles to hold.

The play continued and I nobly did my bit, holding aloft my horn, and trying to lose the censer in the black depths of the pulpit. Then came the moment that every participant, to a child, had been waiting for. Mrs. Meynell had arranged for a donkey to bear Mary down the aisle. This donkey had been plucked from its comfortable field, rattled through the narrow lanes in a truck and was now expected to walk into a dark, echoing space, smelling curiously of incense and the winter clothes of two villages. It was not happy. It dug its heels, metaphorically, into the great flagstones that may well have born the weight of Cromwell's soldiers, and refused to budge. We children held our collective breath. Would it 'go' in the Church? To our great disappointment it did not but the subsequent actions almost made up for that. Two burly farmers pushed it all the way down the aisle. By the time they got to the front of the church they were sweating, which was quite an achievement at that temperature. Once there Mary thankfully jumped off, farmers and donkey made a sharp left turn and the donkey, sensing escape in the form of the north door, accelerated rapidly with the farmers now being dragged over the stone slabs. With a clattering of heels the donkey disappeared into the night, farmers in tow.

The rest of the play went smoothly and all too soon it was time for me to carefully shimmy sideways back down the pulpit stairs. The jangle from the kicked censer reminded me to pick it up and with great bravado I swung it merrily as I led the way back down the aisle to freedom. I knew just how that donkey had felt. With great relief my wings were removed and my glasses replaced. My parents and I walked out into the night. The stars glittered overhead and I knew that soon we would be celebrating Christmas and the great bells of Leam-

ington Hastings church would ring out their message over the fields of sleeping sheep right into our home. **R**

Janet Astle worships at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Calgary, Alta., where she is a member of the choir and the church archivist. Though Canadian born she grew up in Warwickshire (near Coventry), Britain. This story took place in the 1960s.

Rejoice with the Angels quilt by Adaire Schlatter. See page 28 for more about art in churches.

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THE HIDDEN HUNGER

Ending micronutrient malnutrition a worthwhile challenge

by Amy MacLachlan

Photo by Kendra Siekmans



In the November issue of the *Record*, Amy MacLachlan introduced readers to the problem of micronutrient malnutrition in developing countries. In this issue, she explores the programs that are in place to help, and the challenges associated with doing so.

For people in developing countries, eating a diet rich in vitamins, minerals and protein is not always easy. The Presbyterian Church in Canada believes the challenge of a healthy diet is a worthy conquest.

Through its relief and development arm, Presbyterian World Service & Development, the church helps impoverished nations cultivate good nutrition programs. "Nutrition is one of the basic building blocks of development," said PWS&D's communications coordinator, Karen Plater. "The main focus is to empower people so they can live the best they can, and break the cycle of poverty."

Micronutrient deficiencies do more than affect the health of a country's citizens. It affects the health of the country itself. The Copenhagen Consensus — a group of leading economists who rated the impact on human welfare of targeting the world's largest problems — reported this year that investing in programs to halt vitamin and mineral deficiencies was second only to controlling HIV and AIDS. The benefits gained from a healthy workforce, and the numerous possibilities available to create one, are impossible to ignore. Adding iron to flour costs 50 cents a tonne. The cost of iron deficiency anemia to a country equals four dollars per capita per year. In India, for example, this translates into US \$4 billion lost annually.

An added bonus to good nutrition is its effect on other problems. A healthy diet is the starting point for receiving an education, increasing household income and giving people the ability to survive on their own. These factors combine to produce a more amicable society. "It's been shown that good nutrition can actually help reduce the incidence of conflict," said Ms. Plater. "The goal is to make the community stronger so it can withstand disaster." This includes physical conflict as well as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

One of the most insidious nutrient deficiencies in the developing world is iodine deficiency. Iodine deficiency disease (IDD) is the world's leading cause of mental disability and brain damage. About one billion people suffer from some level of the disease. It is estimated that 665 million people have goitre (an enlargement of the thyroid gland) and 20 million are significantly mentally handicapped due to this deficiency. "Iodine is extremely important," said Professor Levente Diosady, director of the food engineering program at the University of Toronto. "It's probably going to have the biggest impact in terms of stopping developmental diseases."

Thanks to programs targeting the iodine problem, about 70 per cent of the world's population now has access to iodized salt — the most popular method of ending the deficiency. This means there are about 60 countries that do not have an iodine supplement in their diet.



Women in North Korea package fortified noodles at a food fortification factory. PWS&D has been active in that country since 1996.

But efforts to change that are encouraging. Thanks to the combined efforts of several aid organizations working with China's government and food product companies, more than 90 per cent of China's 1.3 billion people consume iodized salt. The prevalence of goitre in children has dropped by 60 per cent in five years. While iodizing salt only costs about US five cents a person per year, the benefit of a healthy workforce is expected to inject US \$25 billion into China's economy over the next 10 years, according to a recent UNICEF report. Success is largely attributed to a commitment from the government to improve the health of the country's citizens and co-operation from several sectors.

Moving beyond iodine

When aid organizations saw how effective fortified salt was in reducing iodine deficiency, they looked at ways to improve other deficiencies. Vitamin A and iron shortages were next on the list, as well as B vitamins and folic acid. A new Health Canada study found that the proportion of babies born with neural tube defects (such as spina bifida) in Newfoundland and Labrador dropped by 78 per cent after the federal government

required folic acid to be added to certain grain products in 1998. The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) — a 12-year-old Canadian response to the UN's Summit on Children, which set goals to end malnutrition in children — said 500,000 birth defects occur each year due to folic acid deficiencies. At least 75 per cent of these are thought to be preventable.

Iron deficiency is a problem that plagues women in developing and western nations. To help combat the problem in Nicaragua, SoyNica (a women-owned and operated NGO) and Denise van Wissen (supported by *Presbyterians Sharing...*) are teaching women how to use materials around their homes for better nutrition. One useful discovery is green leaves. When added to jams and drinks, the extract provides as much iron as a vitamin supplement would — and it's more accessible than a pill. The added iron helps supplement the typical Nicaraguan diet of beans and corn.

A lack of Vitamin A causes its own problems. Night blindness and weakening of the immune system are its main effects. Ibrahim Daibes, communications manager at MI Ottawa, said by controlling Vitamin A deficiencies alone, child mortality rates will be reduced by 23 per cent.

Vitamin A was originally given as a supplement twice a year as a quick solution to severe deficiencies. Often piggy-backed with a country's national immunization days (supported by the World Health Organization to help eradicate polio), the supplement often made it out only once a year — instead of the required twice — as the immunizations were given only this frequently. And when the WHO's polio vaccination program

should bear," said Anna Verster, a senior technology advisor at GAIN.

For countries that receive most of the materials free, finding someone to absorb the costs once an NGO pulls out is something MICAH representatives are struggling with. Slated to wrap up in 2005, the project has, in most cases, only improved various situations — it hasn't eliminated the problem. Kendra Siekmans, the program's nutrition manager in Canada, said

growth. Some financially strapped countries lack the political will to support fortification programs. Determining which staple food to enrich (and ensuring the most people and the people most in need will be reached, at a good price, and ensuring the right amount of minerals make it into the food) can also be challenging. That the results of good nutrition aren't always immediate or visible makes the situation even more complex.

To overcome such roadblocks, national education and advocacy programs are used to help teach communities, industry and governments about the importance of food fortification. "We have to be upfront and open and transparent and honest," said Rev. Richard Fee, director of PWS&D. "People wonder when you say something is added. 'Well, what's added?' they will ask." He said the Presbyterian Church's first big fortification project in North Korea was successful because they worked hand in hand with the World Food Program and details were well negotiated with the government.

Anna Verster agrees. Prior to her current position with GAIN, she was doing fortification work in the Middle East. "It was clear that if you don't talk to all the parties from the beginning and make sure they're all talking, it's not going to work," she said. "It can only be done when the government, the ministry of health, industry and the consumers work together."

Small-scale fortification projects, which reach expansive non-urban areas are a focus. Several aid organizations are trying to reach the 1.5 billion people worldwide who rely on cereals processed in small village mills.

wraps up, the method used to distribute supplements will be lost.

Because of the challenges associated with it, fortifying sugar, cooking oil and flour with vitamin A has become a possibility that MI promotes. "An integrated approach has always been the preferred approach," said Mr. Daibes. "You can't always just give a supplement and hope things will get better."

One of MI's duties — especially if the UN's goal of eliminating IDD by 2005 is to be reached — is to encourage countries to make a better effort toward creating vitamin and mineral programs. MI is currently working with UNICEF, a leader in food fortification programs, on a campaign to energize this goal. "It's unjustifiable to not have programs that promote vitamin and mineral deficiencies," said Mr. Daibes.

Money, money, money

Several bumps bar the way to progress — not the least of which is money. Some NGOs, like World Vision Canada's MICAH program (MICronutrient And Health program for Africa), cover the cost of the vitamin pre-mixes, on the basis that poor communities would never invest in an unknown and often suspicious, Western food additive. Others, like GAIN (Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition), assist countries with one-time costs only, such as training staff, building infrastructure, quality control and legislation development. They prefer not to supply the vitamins freely. "That's a recurring cost and we feel it's something the country

the most helpful strategy is to have governments make fortification mandatory, leaving the country with no choice but to take on the operational costs. Without such national cooperation, however, making fortification projects viable in the long run is difficult. However, Ms. Siekmans said millers are often willing to pay a portion of the cost because community members choose their mill over a mill that does not fortify.

A hard sell

Despite the benefits, many people remain skeptical. Some think the added nutrients are birth control, devised by the Western world to control population

What's the difference?

Fortifying foods means adding one or two vitamins or minerals to a food whether or not that food normally contains it. For example, milk is fortified with vitamin D (difficult to find naturally in food) and salt with iodine.

Enriching foods means adding vitamins or minerals to the food that were lost during the refining process. For example, soy beverages are enriched with vitamins in amounts similar to milk.

The facts

In Canada, the following vitamins can be added to specific foods: A, D, E, K, C, thiamin (B1), riboflavin (B2), niacin (B3), folate, vitamin B12, pantothenic acid and biotin. The following minerals can be added to specific foods: sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, iron, zinc, iodide, chloride, copper, fluoride, manganese, chromium, selenium, cobalt, molybdenum, tin, vanadium, silicon and nickel.

A pinch of flour

Flour enrichment started during World War II in the U.K. In 1975, it became mandatory to enrich Canadian flour with B vitamins and iron. Today, this is what the enrichment levels are for flour:

Mandatory — thiamine, riboflavin, niacin or niacinamide, folic acid, iron.

Optional — vitamin B6, d-pantothenic acid, magnesium, calcium carbonate, edible bone meal, ground limestone or calcium sulphate.



Photo by Jennifer Bell, PWS&D

Women in Nicaragua use green leaf extract for an added source of iron in their diet. The PCC supports such initiatives through CFGB, PWS&D and Presbyterians Sharing...

Targeting those who have a direct interest in the country's economy is something Quentin Johnson, creator of the consulting firm, Quican Inc., endorses fully — especially since micronutrient deficiencies can mean a loss of two to three per cent of a country's yearly GDP, according to the Micronutrient Initiative. Iron and iodine deficiencies also translate into a 40 per cent drop in physical production per person. "It is often the ministry of health that we're dealing with, which is always strapped for cash," said Mr. Johnson, who began helping third world countries when mundane product development work in Canada left him hungry for a meaningful project. "We should be aiming at the ministries of industry and commerce. There has to be a global effort within the country."

Rural isolation

Reaching those who most desperately need fortified foods is also difficult. Large, central mills usually only reach the urban population, while remote, rural dwellers who visit small village mills or grind their grain at home are tough to reach. In Malawi, only 14 per cent of the population lives in urban areas. This is why small-scale fortification projects — where small, village mills are equipped

to fortify foods — are becoming popular. These projects are the primary focus of Mr. Johnson, who works closely with several aid organizations. Together, they are trying to reach the 1.5 billion people who rely on cereals processed in small village mills.

There are success stories. A small-scale project in Malawi has grown into a large, independent operation. The Domasi mission, a Presbyterian mission founded in 1868 by Scottish missionaries, took on new life when the Presbytery of Pittsburgh took interest. The mission now boasts two mills — one for flour production, the other for maize. A special fortified food mix called likuni phala is made for severely malnourished children, and maize flour, or mgaiwa, is also fortified at the mill. The mills have grown into a productive, viable business and when they reach capacity, it is projected about 150 metric tonnes will be fortified each year. To further help the situation, new legislation in Malawi bars non-iodized salt from being imported.

PWS&D-supported Ekwendeni Hospital in Northern Malawi fortifies food it gives to patients, and runs an orphan care centre where children are given likuni phala to combat severe malnutrition. Canadian Presbyterian Dr. Mark Young

(supported by *Presbyterians Sharing...*) was instrumental in helping the hospital begin the program.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is ready to take over the funding of another PWS&D project at Ekwendeni. The Organic Matter Technology project educates people on the benefits of a balanced diet and teaches them how to grow legumes and add them to their daily meals. Pigeon peas, peanuts and soy are promoted as inexpensive protein alternatives. Farmers participate in researching which legume is the most beneficial. "They take pride in their contributions and feel it will enhance the future of their communities," said Rachel Besner Kerr, another Canadian Presbyterian working with Ekwendeni on this project. Discarded parts of the plant are then added to the fields, providing a richer soil when a different crop is planted one year later.

Over at GAIN, they have a goal of reaching 40 countries and 600 million people by 2007 with sufficient vitamins and minerals. Mr. Johnson, who of ten works alongside GAIN, has similar ambitions. "My goal is that fortified foods will be available and affordable to everyone," he said. "It started out as a public health intervention. I think it's an investment in the country now." **R**



Where have they come from?

The rising immigrant population provides hope for a declining church

by Peikang Dai

The question “Where have they gone?” raised in the September 2003 *Record* elicited nostalgic memories of our church’s past. The question “Where have they come from?” will address our shared concern for the future of the Presbyterian Church.

Canada has become a dream land for people from all over the world. Year after year, the United Nations continues to rate Canada among the best countries (sometimes, the best country) to live in on this planet. Its magnetic pull brings in multitudes from all the nations — intellectuals who are academically accomplished but spiritually impoverished, dissidents who are psychologically sound but politically paralysed, refugees who are financially desperate but emotionally determined. The current immigration trends give Christians an unprecedented opportunity: we can reach out to people who are otherwise unreachable with traditional overseas missionary efforts.

The door to Canada has been forced open by both insiders and outsiders. The outsiders are driven by economic disparity, political oppression and religious persecution to seek a new life to mend their broken dreams. The insiders are compelled by declining birth rates, an aging population and a growing demand for skilled immigrants to ensure that RRSPs purchased in 2004 can be cashed in 2040 for a comfortable retirement.

For both insiders and outsiders, the preamble of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, imbued with Christian values, rings loudly that Canada was founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.

Yet assaults on Christians happen around the world on a daily basis: by communism through oppression and persecution, racism by marginalization and alienation, and consumerism by material comforts and spiritual corruption.

Whether we are ready or not, the demographic face and racial composition of Canada have changed forever. The city of Toronto takes great pride in proclaiming, “Only the United Nations speaks more languages than we do.” Today, the largest group of immigrants

**History often repeats itself
but opportunities seldom do.
Only when we welcome
newcomers will we grow into
an active body of Christ.**

comes from mainland China. These newcomers have advanced education but limited English proficiency, skills in high demand but substantial cultural barriers, years of political brainwashing and an empty vacuum of atheism. Back in China, they were often beyond the reach of Christian missionary efforts, but here in Canada, they are eager to seek to understand the peace, joy and hope witnessed among Christians.

The decline in membership of the Presbyterian Church is disturbing, but the rising immigrant population brings a hopeful challenge. The Presbyterian legacy is cherished at home and overseas by many. We all want to see the great tradi-

tions of Reformed theology, warm hospitality and missionary endeavours preserved. We preserve what we love. We love what we understand. And we understand what we have been taught. *Unless we reach out and teach the newcomers as commanded by the Great Commission, we will continue to see the decline.*

The Chinese character “crisis” is composed of two parts: crisis and opportunity. The Presbyterian Church is facing a crisis with declining membership, but the rising number of newcomers entering Canada has generated unlimited opportunities. We can reach out to the new waves of immigrants and extend traditional Scottish hospitality, share the gospel and teach solid Reformed theology, then welcome the contribution newcomers can make to the church at all levels.

Canada Ministries caught the vision of the 1981 General Assembly and adopted a recommendation into its policy, that: “congregations, presbyteries, and national boards and committees [need] to seek out leadership from minority group Presbyterians. If we are a pluralistic church, we must be seen to be a pluralistic church. Representatives of the minority groups who make up the membership of our congregations must be given opportunity to use their gifts on sessions, boards, church school staff, leadership of presbytery committees and national staff.”

In 1997, I was asked to preach in a Presbyterian church in Toronto. At the end of the service, a senior member in her late 70s held my hands and told me in tears: “They are going to close down my church. I have been here for years.”

“Who are they?” I asked.


"Those people who make the decisions."

In the Presbyterian Church, with a solid democratic structure, decisions are in the hands of the members of the congregation. But when I looked at the few seated in the pews, I wondered if the decision to close the church had been preceded by a lack of zeal or enthusiasm to include newcomers and make them feel at home.

History often repeats itself, but opportunities seldom do. Only when we welcome newcomers with open arms, genuine hearts and the whole Bible will congregations grow into an active body in Christ.

When I look back on my Christian journey, I am grateful to God for Knox (Spadina), Toronto, where active outreach, consistent hospitality and faithful biblical preaching continue to draw the multitudes. At this church, my home church, I learned that unconditional love is loving those who don't like me and those I don't like, that compassion is making a living by what we get and making a life by what we give, and that justice is standing up to injustice so we are not, in effect, collaborating with it.

It is my hope that members of the Presbyterian Church will respond to the call of Canada Ministries to include the newcomers among us. It is my conviction that members of the Presbyterian Church will continue to grow as long as we are faithful to the Bible and hold to the subordinate standards. And it is my vision that what the members of the Presbyterian Church have accomplished at home and overseas can be repeated, with another harvest coming from among the waves of newcomers at our doorsteps.

The first step to embark on this long journey should not be difficult. It is as simple as looking into the eyes of newcomers in our communities and asking, "Where have you come from?" 

Rev. Peikang Dai grew up in a labour camp during the Cultural Revolution in China, where he joined the Communist party. He was baptized at Knox (Spadina), Toronto, and is now a minister with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. He is married to Ellen Rae, daughter of Rev. Dr. Ron and Alice Foubister. The Dais feel called to serve the multitudes of Mandarin-speaking immigrants, visiting scholars and students from mainland China. Contact Rev. Peikang Dai at servechina@hotmail.com.

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The Eureka moment Finding beauty through God

Artwork enjoys increased popularity with Canadian congregations

by Amy MacLachlan

I'm a bit of a 'eureka!' idea person," said Laurie McGugan, an artist and member of St. John's Church in Toronto. She took four months to complete the *Tree of Life*, the 6-by-10-foot mural that now hangs at the church entrance. It was placed there to be the first vibrant image parishioners see when walking through the door. "It captures the spirit of the place," she said.

A 15-year member of St. John's and actively involved in the church's youth group, she doesn't know exactly where her ideas originate. "I usually think of an idea and then the medium is secondary," she said. "The idea is dominant — it's the rule, the deciding factor. And from where the ideas come, I'm not really sure. They're God-given, I guess!"

Although she was commissioned to create the painting to honour Mary Pratley, a deceased member of St. John's, Ms. McGugan wanted to commemorate the lives of the entire congregation. Starting with the church's Celtic roots, the *Tree of Life* has a Celtic knot at its base which branches out into a living tree and into the lives of the people in the congregation — lives that are varied and ethnically diverse.

The vibrancy and diversity of the downtown church is the painting's central theme. The plethora of images and symbols in the painting honour that diversity. "That's one thing I like about it," she said. "People can come to it at different times and see something different than they saw before. You can have your own impression of it."

Only upon close inspection do the numerous individual images begin to



Detail from *Tree of Life* by Laurie McGugan. The mural now hangs in St. John's Church, Toronto.

take shape. She incorporated humour, the congregation's gifts and talents, elements from members' lives outside the church, and children who can be seen nesting comfortably in the tree's branches or falling out of the tree and caught by someone below. "It's the culture and acceptance at this congregation that's great," she said. "It leaves it to be a very friendly and open place."

While working on the concept, she sought the congregation's input. Collaborating with the minister, session and congregation, she asked them how they wanted to represent themselves, hoping to satisfy the vision they had for it. "I interpreted what they said in my own way,

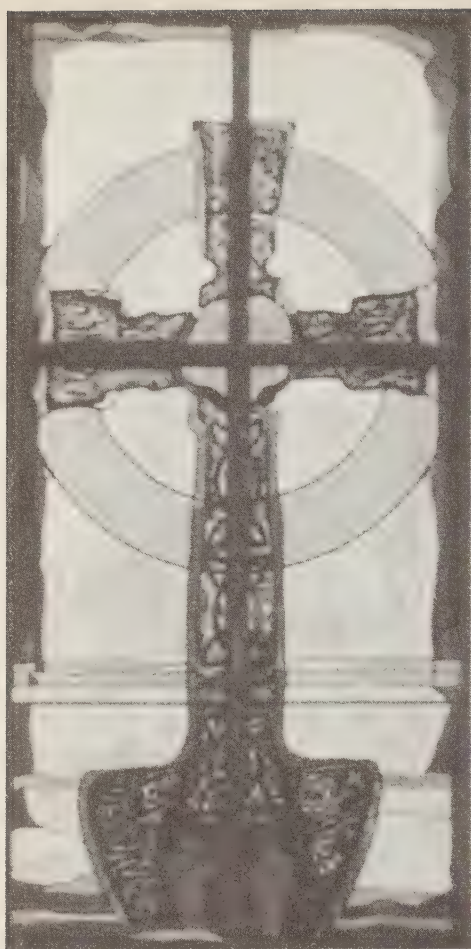
and they honoured it. And that was really great," said Ms. McGugan. "I really enjoy artwork that involves the public, and this commission was a way to practise that in a slightly more literal way."

Glorious glass

Sarah Hall has created almost 500 stained glass pieces (see December 2003 front and inside *Record* cover; and the inside cover of this issue) and has won numerous awards for her breathtaking glass designs. Her training in this art is long and distinguished. Studying in Toronto and Wales, she later spent a year in Jerusalem studying gold leaf and ancient Middle Eastern techniques. One of only five Canadian glass artists to become a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art, Ms. Hall's designs can be seen in both religious and secular institutions.

Captivated by its beauty, she fell in love with stained glass at the age of nine while on church tours with her father. She opened her own studio in 1980. Working on a variety of projects — from a small multi-faith hospital chapel to Marble Collegiate Church in New York City — she savours the relationships she builds while working on projects. "I always attend at least one service and, perhaps, one social event," she said. "We have a dialogue. It's not, 'I want this' or 'I'm doing that.' We have a wonderful relationship that's very meaningful and it often lasts for years."

When determining what a window will look like, she considers what the building needs in terms of colour, imagery and light. The window's location and its size and shape also dictate the



Celtic Cross Window by Sarah Hall donated by Claudine Wallace in memory and celebration of the ministry of her husband, Rev. William Wallace, at Richmond Hill Church, Ontario.

design, ensuring that each work of art is uniquely fitted to its surroundings. The congregation's personality and the hopes it has for the piece also influence the decision.

At Richmond Hill Church in Ontario, where three windows in the parish hall were commissioned to celebrate the life of their late minister, Rev. Bill Wallace, Ms. Hall created windows that were meaningful to the congregation. She noticed that many members wear Celtic crosses. The meaning of the cross — an axis between heaven and earth when a person passes on and the knot symbolizing a bond with God that is endless and cannot be undone — resonated with Ms. Hall's Scottish background. She incorporated the cross at the base of the window, connecting Mr. Wallace's memory to Scripture, the spiritual journey of the congregation and the historical roots of Christianity and the denomination.

A Quaker, she said she loves working in churches because "it connects to my

Once I get the idea, I am just an instrument. It is directed by God. It sounds corny, but it is inspired. It is breathed on by God as I work on it.

own spiritual journey, and every church offers me a unique opportunity to create work just for them." Depending on the church, this can be intimidating. When commissioned to create windows for Marble Collegiate Church in New York City, she discovered the last time the church did this was 100 years ago when the artist was Mr. Tiffany of Tiffany & Co. The unveiling of her windows was surrounded by pomp and excitement. Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations, was even invited to the occasion.

"Art can open doors, illuminate the possible and forge a connection with the spiritual," writes Ms. Hall on her website. "My work in the medium of glass is to create windows that point to and connect with something beyond themselves."

Although Canadian churches have yet to develop the impressive art collections that many European churches boast, she said there is a growing interest in Canada to bring more art into its religious spaces. The problem is that most people don't know where to start.

To remedy this, Ms. Hall wrote *The Color of Light: Commissioning Stained Glass for a Church*, hoping to demystify the art world for the uninitiated. She said local crafts councils contain a registry of stained glass artists in the country and enable prospective clients to view artists' portfolios. Advertisements in religious publications and architects are also good sources.

Old technique in Ottawa

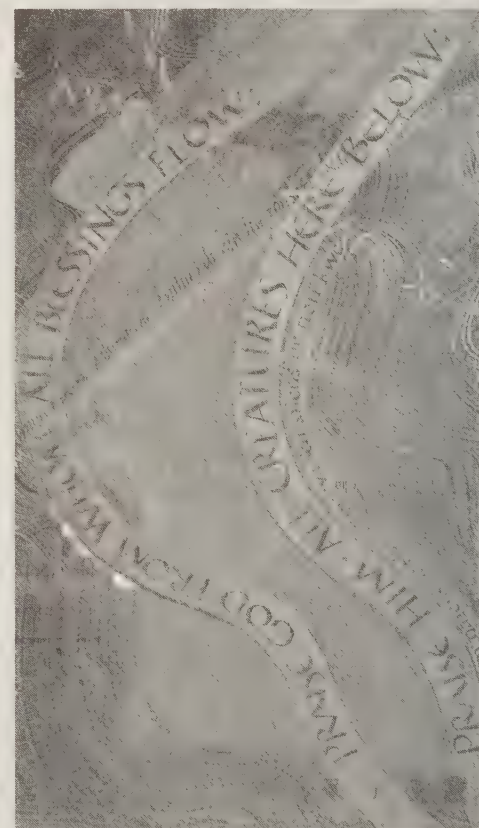
While teaching high school art for 13 years, Heather Mallett didn't know she would one day trade in her chalk and blackboard for a calligraphy pen and paper. But after taking a leave of absence in 1986 to study calligraphy, she never returned to the classroom.

A member of St. John's Anglican Church in downtown Ottawa, she has the church's annual exhibition, Art Credo, to

thank for her success. Ms. Mallett's art was featured at the inaugural exhibit 27 years ago. A representative from a gallery in Toronto attended and asked Ms. Mallett and several other artists to bring some of their work to the Toronto gallery.

Ms. Mallett said most of her commissioned work comes from people who have seen her work at Art Credo. She hasn't done many pieces for churches but is eager to work for more congregations. "I can honestly be who I am, without trying to cover it up as I may have to in the secular world."

St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa recently commissioned her work for its 175th anniversary. *The Burning Bush* (see June 2003 *Record* cover) now hangs behind glass along with a commemorative book to which Ms. Mallett contributed. It was completed in the old technique of paste-paper, where wheat flour and water are cooked into a paste, colour is added, and



Detail from *The Burning Bush* by Heather Mallett. The art now hangs in St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa.

the paste is applied to paper. While wet, pieces of balsa wood, broken credit cards — anything with a sharp or rough edge — are used to draw on and design the surface. When the paper is dry, a surface is left that is “wonderful for lettering on,” said Ms. Mallett.

Floating amongst the flames of *The Burning Bush* is the doxology — translated into English, French, Dutch, Cree, Chinese, Inuktitut and Chechewa. The idea came to Ms. Mallett in discussions with members of the congregation. “To me, ecumenical things are important,” she said. “The doxology is fairly universal in the Christian Church, so that’s what I was pushing for.”

Although she considers architecture to be of utmost importance when designing a piece and realizes “you bring into everything what you are,” these are not the only places where she gains inspiration. “For the St. Andrew’s piece, once I got the idea, I was just an instrument. It was directed by God,” she said. “It sounds corny, but it was inspired. It was breathed on by God as I was working on it.”

Much to her delight, the finished product was met with a warm response. “I’ve had a lot of people speak to me personally about the piece, even though I don’t go to that church. The people there have been amazing,” she said. “For me, it’s an enormous honour to do this. It’s very humbling.”

Quilting in Calgary

Sheila Kirkland has been quilting and creating fabric banners since 1975. A 20-year member of St. Andrew’s, Calgary, she got her start at the centennial celebration of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, when she organized a banner competition for adults, youth and children. She was later asked to be on the Millennium Committee, where her quilts took centre stage.

Back in 1975, she said, “art was not prevalent and was almost rejected in churches” — a discouraging fact for a fine arts graduate with a major in renaissance art. She said many Protestant churches in Europe have little more than Gothic architecture to beautify the buildings — a trend that continued in Canadian churches.



Past, Present and Future quilt designed by Betty MacKay and Susan McLennan, quilted by members of Bethel Church, Scotsburn, Nova Scotia.

However, Ms. Kirkland is optimistic about the future and said art is now enjoying a resurgence in Canadian churches. Even more encouraging is that artists are being allowed to express themselves more freely — rather than being confined to specific ideas of clergy. “There’s not as much ‘This is what we want.’ They’re listening to the laypeople a little more and letting artists express themselves.”

Her quilt exhibit for the millennium celebration, entitled *Stitches of Faith*, was on display at the 2000 General Assembly in Hamilton, Ont., and travelled across Canada for two years. As a 20-year member of St. Andrew’s, Calgary and the Presbyterian representative on the Calgary Council of Churches, she hopes to put together an ecumenical banner and quilt exhibit that will also

tour churches across the country.

Her banners — made out of painted fabric, appliqué or traditional stitching — and quilts currently hang inside St. Andrew’s, where they follow the liturgical calendar and commemorate special events in the congregation’s life. Easter, Lent and Christmas all have banners devoted to them, as do celebrations such as communion, baptism and marriage. Her ideas for quilt and banner designs come from the Bible.

Although pleased that art is becoming more commonplace in churches, Ms. Kirkland is quick to point out that standards must be met when doing any type of art. “We have to be careful to aim for excellence. Good intentions are not enough,” she said. “That’s important. My hope is that we keep a standard of excellence no matter what we do.” **R**

The congregation at Melville Presbyterian Church in Brussels, Ont., celebrated 150 years of Christian witness with a Homecoming Celebration and Service. Cutting the anniversary cake are Cathrine Campbell, Carolyn McAvoy and Ken Innes, current and former ministers of the church. ▶



◀ Rev. Dr. Doug Robinson celebrates his 25th anniversary of ordination. Over those years he has served in Manitoba and across southwestern Ontario. In 1989 he went to Knox College to get his Masters of Theology. He currently serves at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Thorold, Ont.



◀ Edith Bremner celebrates her 70th anniversary as a member of the choir at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Black River Bridge, N.B.

Rev. Dr. Tony Plomp stands with his wife, Margaret, ▶ beside replicas of stained glass in the Richmond Presbyterian Church doors — a gift upon his retirement in late July after over 36 years of distinguished ministry. For the past seventeen years, he also fulfilled the role of deputy clerk on a part-time basis, a post he will continue to serve. The stained glass were made by congregation member John Rawlins, who did the original glass. Dr. Plomp was also a long serving columnist for the *Record*.



Had cake lately?

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The Record, 50 Wynford Dr., Toronto, M3C 1J7.

To be considered for People and Places, photographs should be sharp and everyone clearly identified. Group photographs reproduce poorly and can rarely be used. Photographs will not be returned.

On June 27, the people of Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Ont., celebrated more than 75 years of faithful membership of Margaret Kuel (center). Brought up at Knox, Margaret served as church secretary to four ministers, three of whom were present at the celebration, also as an Elder, Clerk of Session, member of Pastoral Care and other church groups. She's moving to the Sunshine Coast of B.C. to be closer to her daughter, Ann-Margaret Sumner (right). Also pictured are the four ministers. Left to right: Brooke and Linda Ashfield (present ministers), Albert Bailey and Walter McLean.



Elmer Sutton (second from left) was presented with a bible and certificate of recognition on his retirement after almost 38 years of service as an Elder at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Hillsburgh, Ont. His wife, Betty, was also recognized for her many years of service in the choir. Making the presentation is Shane Tanner, Clerk of Session, and Rev. Peter Barrow, guest minister.

The PCW Friendship Guild poses for a 10th anniversary photo in front of the High Pulpit and Presenters Box in Union Presbyterian Church in Mira, N.S. The group took over the duties of the Senior Ladies at the time.



The congregation of Union Presbyterian Church in Mira, N.S., gathered to watch former minister Rev. Neil J. MacLean turn the sod for their new church hall. Also taking part were Pastor Kevin Richardson, Rev. Angus MacKinnon and the elders. The church will celebrate its 150th anniversary in August 2007.

St. Andrew's Church School in Lindsay, Ont., raised \$367.20 with its second annual geranium sale. The proceeds will assist with the support of its three foster children. Left to right: organizer and teacher Janice Loeb, teacher Jeff Loeb, student Emma Franklin, Jessy O'Neill and Ruth Eyres.



Seventy-five members of St. Andrew's, Ottawa, began a new congregational year with a weekend retreat in September. Led by Rev. Derek Macleod of Briarwood Church, Beaconsfield, Que., the group gathered at Gracefield Camp.

Rev. Marty Molengraaf and his wife, Barbara, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary with a cake at Nanson Hall, Duff's Presbyterian Church in Puslinch, Ont.



After three months of knitting, the Women's Missionary Society of First Presbyterian Church in Portage la Prairie, Man., presented 118 items — 59 pneumonia prevention vests, 58 baby caps and one blanket — to Jobat Hospital in India.

Bill Smith (center) elder and treasurer for 40 years at Knox Presbyterian, Uptergrove, Ont., is honoured by his peers. Presenting him a certificate is David Drybrough, Clerk of Session. Also present are other members of the Session: Margaret Montgomery, Frank Hutzol, Rev. Jeffrey Smith and John MacDonald.

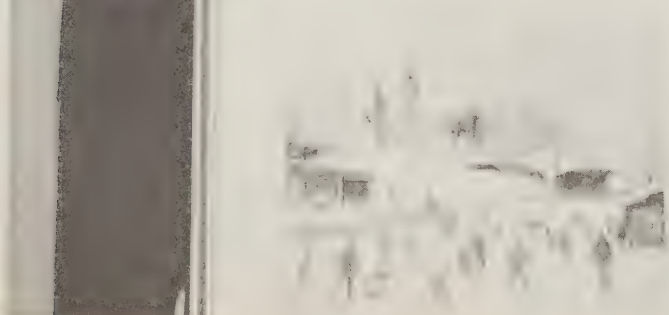


Tea & Talk on Tuesday at Two at Knox Presbyterian, Bobcaygeon, Ont. Ruth Eberts and Gail Morrison offer a piano duet for the congregation as well as the community and tourists during a summer outreach fellowship.



The Rev. Ralph Fluit, moderator of Pickering Presbytery, presents a cheque for \$16,100 to Adrienne Finlay, the Faith Relations officer for Habitat for Humanity. The presbytery had committed itself to helping Habitat when it agreed to host the 2004 General Assembly.

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Hayes and his wife Moira receive some gifts of appreciation from their former congregation at Knox Ottawa, upon their departure for St. Andrew's, Quebec City.



Painting a new picture

Two church groups re-evaluate the concept of mission

Traditionally, the word 'mission' paints a picture of a team of religion specialists sent to a foreign country to propagate their faith. Over time, mission has come to mean something quite different in the Presbyterian church. For example, Slocan B.C. isn't a foreign country, but it is 650 km from the Fraser Valley — a long day's drive, especially when piloting an RV. And three retired couples from Haney Presbyterian Church in Maple Ridge, B.C., hardly constitute a team of religion specialists. However, in the summer of 2004, the Session of Haney Presbyterian designated a church-painting request from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church — a small congregation in the West Kootenay community of Slocan — as a mission project. And six would-be painters, Bev and Jack Way, Carol and David Tebbutt, and Carol and Bob Garvin, became missionaries.

Enormous hailstones marked the arrival of the volunteers in the Slocan Valley. Not ideal painting weather, but the threatening clouds and occasional rain showers didn't dampen their spirits. On Sept. 1, with scaffolding, planks, and painting supplies on hand, these unlikely missionaries began the arduous scraping and wire-brushing of this well-worn church.

St. Andrew's is the oldest operating institution in the community, and its dozen members provide the only Protestant witness in this town of 360 people. It is a two-point charge along with Passmore, located a half-hour drive south. The congregation is 106 years old, estab-



Brushing up on mission work:
Kenora, Ont. top;
Slocan, B.C., bottom.

lished in 1897 — the year the railway reached the city and the steamship S.S. Slocan began service on the lake for which she was named. The current building was constructed in 1927 and left unpainted for forty years. First painted in the 1960's, its most recent facelift was in the early 1990's.

With six enthusiastic volunteers hard at work, the seventy-seven-year-old siding once more soaked up paint — fifteen gallons in all — and when the work was

completed the building was, once again, pristine white.

On the other side of the country, another mission was underway. In early September, two vehicles loaded with nine passengers from the Presbytery of Lambton-West Middlesex started a three-day drive from the Toronto area to Kenora, Ont. Anamiewigummig ('house of prayer'), formerly known as the Fellowship Centre, was celebrating its 40th anniversary and needed some sprucing

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up. Over the course of seven days, the missionaries — Susan and Terry Samuel, Henry Wallace, Roberta Sweet, Margaret McNeil, Russ McLean, John Flick, Isobel and Dave Culbert — washed and painted the structure. They completed electrical repairs and installed a ventilation fan and two computers. They also managed to tour the local Abitibi paper mill and visit the First Nations village of Grassy Narrows.

“At the blockade — a 24/7 forest watch which has effectively stopped clear-cutting in that region — we heard the other side of the issue concerning the use and abuse of traditional hunting grounds,” wrote Terry Samuel. The following day, the visitors learned more about the “Treaty Three” region of Manitoba and north-western Ontario from Adolphus Cameron, communications officers for the Grand Chiefs of Treaty Three Region. “We came to see in a new way the story of how Europeans came to this land; how they met with First Nations peoples and signed treaties with them which promised a shared use of land and resources, a mutual respect and shared jurisdiction and decision-making process.” The mission was a success and the missionaries returned home exhausted but with a better understanding of the issues and challenges facing all peoples in that area.

For the volunteers in B.C., the work didn’t end once the church was painted and they returned home. From their reflections on the week’s endeavour came the idea to send a \$500 donation to the Slocan congregation to help offset the cost of the paint. The men took the idea to the Haney Men’s Group and the women to their Ladies’ Evening Fellowship. Each group chose to contribute the full amount and a cheque for \$1,000 was sent to St. Andrew’s.

“For a congregation of so few members,” writes Carol J. Garvin, one of the missionaries, “the cost of maintaining a presence in the area is significant. That St. Andrew’s and her partner congregation in Passmore have both been able to be self-supporting of even a part-time minister is remarkable.... Yet providing Christian witness in such areas is valid ministry. Valid and vital.” **R**

Record staff with notes from Carol Garvin and Terry Samuel.

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Love, learn and do

Spiritual education in small groups

by Susan Kerr and Ryk Brown

Calvin Knox was sitting in the congregation of Knox-Anywhere Presbyterian church one Sunday listening to the children's story and he noted that the children seemed to know their Bible stories better than he did. Jane, the clerk of session, was sitting in front of Calvin. During the announcement time she'd been listening to the youth group talking about their new mission project. She wondered why the teenagers seemed to be more active in mission than she was. Meanwhile her thoughts were consumed by her daughter's impending divorce and her feelings of helplessness in the face of her daughter's pain. Where would she find time to fit in a mission project? Some days she felt like she could be a mission project herself! Across the aisle, Rafik, a local university student, was feeling a need to grow deeper in his spirituality. When he looked at the list of activities in the bulletin, he couldn't see how going to a committee meeting or volunteering for the upcoming bake sale would help, and he couldn't go to the Wednesday morning Bible study while he was in school.

After church, over coffee, Calvin gently asked Jane how she was doing. Then they began discussing the children's story and the youth mission project. Rafik asked Jane if she knew of any evening Bible studies. Forty minutes later the three of them were still talking. As Jane got out her keys to lock up the church, she said longingly, "It would be nice to do this more often." Rafik joined in, "I know a great book about spiritual growth in tough times. Maybe the three of us could get together for a coffee and take a look at it?"

More and more people in churches today are discovering a model of integrated learning, caring and mission known as Small Group Ministry, Cell Groups, LIFE Groups, etc. Often these small groups are born out of the unspoken need for deep Christian fellowship. Education in a small group setting includes more than just Bible study and adult spiritual education; it also includes intentional fellowship and caring, as well as opportunities for Christian service — all integrated together into one holistic group experience.

What does a small group look like?

A typical small group usually comprises:

- about 8-12 people,
- who meet together on a regular basis (weekly),
- for 60-90 minutes,

- with a trained leader,
- in a location provided by a designated host,
- and they operate under the oversight of the session.

What does a small group do?

A small group is more than just a Bible study. A small group *does* meet to study the Bible, but their Bible study focusses on practical life applications. The phrase "love, learn, and do" was coined by Lyman Coleman, one of the early pioneers of small group ministries in his Serendipity program. Coleman's phrase, "love, learn and do" has become a handy way of remembering the three-fold purpose of small groups.

- "Love" — Groups gather to provide fellowship, pastoral care, support, and community for their members. They also intentionally take time to care for

and support the other members of the group. The group gatherings are a safe place where people can discuss the challenges in their life in a confidential setting and receive the support and feedback of fellow Christians walking with them on their spiritual journey

- "Learn" — Groups gather to study the Bible with an accompanying curriculum. The curriculum is chosen by the group in consultation with the minister.
- "Do" — These groups are also active in some sort of evangelism or service ministry, that can be as simple as hosting a coffee hour, or as grand as volunteering at the local food bank. Leaving an empty chair in their meeting and praying for, and inviting, a new person to join their group is another simple example.

How does it work?

Although the need for small group ministries is often spoken first at the grass roots level, the session must decide if this is the right kind of ministry for the congregation before it can embark on the journey of small group ministries.

The next step in the process is the identification of potential leaders, and the willingness of the minister to arrange for training of those leaders. Training gives the leaders the ability to discern their calling, gives them more confidence to lead and helps assure that the groups remain safe and non-divisive. When using the LIFE groups training manual materials, leaders in training are also made aware of how the small group fits under the Presbyterian system of oversight and accountability within the broader structure of the church.

Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: "For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another." (Rom 12.4-5)

While we worship as "one body", individual needs for learning and caring are often sacrificed in order to accomplish the many tasks of ministry. This is not to say that the church is not a caring body. But how do we provide a healthy

If faith is to leap off the pages of the Bible, then we have to be as the Body of Christ

place for people to experience pastoral care, learn and grow in their faith, and participate with others in serving Christ's mission? Education in the context of small group ministry provides such opportunity.

The beauty of small groups is they are not just another program to add to your already busy church life! Education in small groups can begin in groups that already exist if they want to increase their membership and their depth of Christian community. Each member of a small group brings their own unique gifts and characteristics to the group, but each member has a responsibility for the others as well. Certain covenants are established at the beginning of the group to maintain healthy confidentiality (see *LIFE Groups Leaders Handbook Volume 1*, below); pastoral care matters can be dealt with through the group, but are also reported to session if needed. In this way, the learning encourages growth and caring in Christ so the group becomes "doers of the word, and not hearers only." (James 1:22)

The choir at Knox-Anywhere, decided to become a small group. In their regular reporting to session, they voiced this desire, and Jane helped the group to discern which one of their members would be the best leader for the small group. At the end of the two-weekend course, Heather, the choir's chosen group leader, spoke with the minister about the

"learn" component of "love, learn and do" for the choir. Since the choir chose hymns for the Sunday services based on the passages that were to be used in worship, she asked the minister to provide the passages and a scripture theme to them ahead of time.

The choir began intentionally using education in their small group to enrich their ministry in the church. They would gather, and Heather would ask how people were doing. They would share the Scripture passages, and all members of the group would participate in choosing the songs. They would practice, and end their time in prayer for the needs expressed, for the worship that week, for an empty chair that represented a new member of their choir.

Over a period of months, the requests for elder's care or pastoral care needs from the choir decreased — needs were being met in the group, since essentially, the choir had become its own "district", and reported to session through Heather. Since the Bible readings tied in directly with their passion for music, the team as a whole became more biblically literate. Their opportunity to talk about the Bible and their faith in the group also made these worship leaders more confident, and able to speak about their faith to people who asked them questions after the service. As a result, the choir grew.

There was no extra meeting involved, and no one was being forced to do something they weren't already doing, yet the education they were involved in became a part of their everyday lives and spilled out into the community.

If education in our faith is to leap off the pages of the Bible and into the lives of the people around us, then we need to engage in opportunities to love, learn and do together as the Body of Christ. **R**

Susan Kerr is a former high school teacher who completed her Bachelor of Education before entering professional ministry. Susan has written and prepared curriculum for the Hamilton Board of Education. She was recently the pastor of Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterdown, Ontario.

Ryk Brown has been studying small group ministries for 10 years and is author of *The Presbyterian Cell Church: A Very Ancient Model of Ministry for a Very Modern Time*. Ryk is presently the pastor of Aldershot Presbyterian Church in Burlington, Ontario.

They have brought together an expertise in small group ministry theory with an understanding of education and curriculum writing to create the LIFE Groups Leadership Training Program.

Check the Year of Education website at www.presbyterian.ca/flames/education for updates of ideas, resources and events.

Theory Resources:

- *LIFE Groups Leaders Training Manual 1 & 2*, by Susan Kerr & Ryk Brown
- *The Presbyterian Cell Church*, by Ryk Brown
- *Small Groups in the Church*, by Thomas G. Kilpatrick, Alban Institute, New York, 1995

Study resources:

- Bible 101 series from Willow Creek
- The Serendipity Bible
- The Christian Reformed Church *Discovery Series*
- (We have reviewed over fifty different curricula and would be happy to share the list!)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How is your church living out Romans 12.4-5?
2. How is the need for community and learning currently expressed in your congregation?
3. How is your congregation currently answering that need?
4. How do Bible study groups in your congregation integrate what they study with daily life?
5. How do the Bible study groups in your congregation encourage care for members of the group?
6. How do groups in your church grow (spiritually and numerically)?
7. Can you see which groups in your church would be interested in small group education?
8. Are you interested in this model of ministry? If so, what will you do about it?

Dangerous journey brings wonderful reward

One woman's struggle to keep her baby alive

Let us consider Rose, a young, attractive woman and very much in love with the man she had recently married. Village life had never been easy in their part of Poland, but a combination of hard work and God's grace kept them in one piece. The crops grew, the sun shone and she had just found out she was pregnant.

She was part of a Jewish family that had arrived almost five hundred years earlier, and had known darkness and light. But by 1890 the Russians were in control and there was much state-sanctioned anti-semitism. Mobs of drunken men would raid, rape and murder.

It was, said the patriarch of the clan, time to move on. So with tears in their eyes for the land and for the many local people who had been their friends they packed up what little they owned, and by cart and foot moved westwards.

The journey was hard at first, and soon became agony. As borders were crossed, villages entered and passed, the group of refugees sometimes met charity, sometimes indifference but too often downright hostility. They were stoned in one place. But on they went, knowing there was no other direction in which to travel.

Rose was showing by now, and told the assembled cousins, aunts, uncles and community she was expecting a baby. Her husband gripped her hand as she shared the good news. Of course they were pleased, they wanted her to know that. But she had to realise that the trip was far from over, and that it would be almost impossible for her in a few weeks.

One man stepped forward to have his say. He had served in the Russian army

for half his life after being kidnapped from his home when a teenager. He still had the ring that was put through his ear inscribed with the words, "Property of the Tsar". He had seen much. "They will not let you on boats and trains if they see you're with child," he said. "You'll lose the baby anyway. Better to lose it now and save yourself."

Rose felt her head swim. She had heard about these things going on but had never heard them suggested. He

**Don't do what they say,
but do what you know
to be right**

wanted her to kill her baby, to get rid of it, to have an abortion. No, she said. No, no, no. She would not do such a thing, never. And then she cried.

A very old woman put her arms around Rose and whispered in Yiddish. "Don't do what they say, but do what you know to be right." But how do I know what is right? asked Rose. "Listen to your conscience, which is made and formed by God. We all hear it, but some of us pretend to be deaf."

Rose was not very religious, not compared to some, but the words left an impression. She ran to her husband, who simply held her and said only that it was their child, but she had to carry it and it was her life that was at risk on the journey. They embraced and cried and embraced a little more.

Onwards they went. The snow and the cold stopped, the land became less bold, the people more open. The baby grew bigger. Finally, after what seemed

like an endless story of horror, they reached a port, larger than anything she had ever seen. She could barely walk now, and she had terrible pains in her stomach. She thought the baby might be dead.

The former soldier had been right in most of his warnings, and in predicting they would be denied passage on a ship because of her state. The captain of the ancient steamer said he couldn't take her. She pleaded, but he understood not a word. Then she felt a cramp, so bad that she bent over. The hardened, rough old sailor rushed to help her. As he did so he looked into her eyes. "All right," he shouted, "just this once. Go on, climb aboard before I change my mind."

They boarded, and arrived safely in London, England the next day. There they settled and made a humble but safe life for themselves. And where Rose, my great grandmother, gave birth to my grandmother, who gave birth to my father. Thank you grandma. For life. **R**

Michael Coren is a broadcaster, author, and speaker. Visit his website at www.michaelcoren.com.

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Rural presbytery committed to lay missionaries

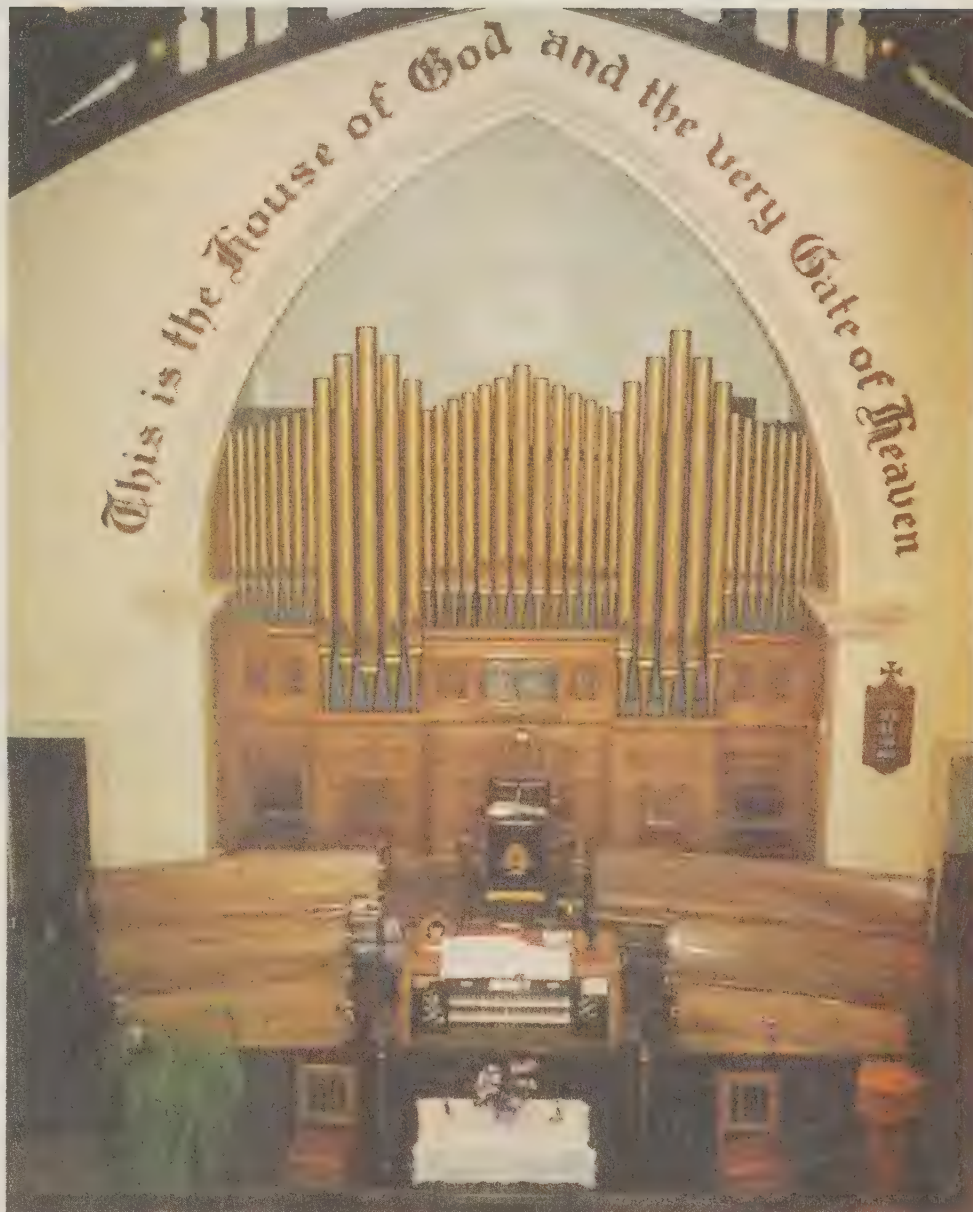
The presbytery of Assiniboia

by Amy MacLachlan

The endless horizon, miles of golden wheat fields, strong winds and swirling dust of the Saskatchewan prairies are magical to some; a love affair that lasts a lifetime. To others, such wide open spaces and few human inhabitants are an empty prison from which to escape, or reason enough to never come at all.

The presbytery of Assiniboia, encompassing Regina, Moose Jaw, Swift Current and several small towns, knows plenty about the difficulties of attracting ministers to its rural churches. There are only five ministers and one lay missionary in a presbytery of 10 charges. Three of those charges have two points. Their main challenge is finding people to fill the gaps, and provide the committed ministry congregations need. "It's hard to find people willing to come out to the prairies," said Rev. Shirley Barker-Kirby, minister at Norman Kennedy in Regina and an urban transplant to the farmland of Saskatchewan. "I don't understand why. I came out here by choice and I think the prairies are a great place to be!"

Assiniboia was created in June 1949 when the presbyteries of Regina and Moose Jaw merged. Membership was 3,980. Today it stands at 925. The decline speaks to the problems that plague small prairie towns and rural areas throughout Canada. People are simply leaving. Farmers may suffer from drought or frozen crops, lose their farms, and are forced to move. Closed borders to Canadian beef are putting a new strain on cattle farmers. Families that remain often lose their children to the city's promise of prosperity. It's not a new phenomenon, but it whittles



The interior of Knox Church, Weyburn, is just as W.O. Mitchell describes it in his Canadiana classic, *Who Has Seen the Wind?*

away the population and the number of people in the pews.

Assiniboia used to be a thriving, growing community. In the days before the presbytery was born, Saskatchewan was booming. Railroads were being built, missionaries were sent to preach to natives, and people were settling in small towns. W.O. Mitchell wrote about

Saskatchewan in his Canadiana classic, *Who Has Seen the Wind?* The author grew up in Weyburn, the home of Knox Presbyterian, the church described in his book. Dedicated in March 1907, Knox can trace its roots back to 1899. The building seats 450 people — a clue to the kind of crowds it used to attract. Today, First Church in Regina (established in

1969) is the presbytery's largest congregation with 215 members and weekly attendance just over half that number.

That the presbytery is large geographically but small numerically compounds the problem. Members and ministers are spread over large distances. Convincing new ministers to move far away from their families to a place where a spouse may have difficulty finding work is not an enticement.

As many points remain vacant, congregations sometimes rely upon lay missionaries to serve their needs. The presbytery is committed to garnering recognition for lay missionaries. They are not ordained, have not been to seminary, and are not permitted to vote at presbytery meetings. They are also not allowed to perform the sacraments — a prohibition that disappoints both lay missionaries and congregation members. Dennis Irving serves the dual-point charge of St. Mark's in Moose Jaw and Knox in Briercrest and wants his position to be seen as a bona fide calling. He wishes he could officiate over sacraments, rather than import an ordained

minister to do so. "They don't know the people the way I do. I see them 365 days a year," he said, "but it's hard for the national church to see that."

Rev. Catherine Dorcas agreed. "They become ministers to the people they serve," said the presbytery clerk and minister at St. Andrew's in Moosomin. "People introduce them as 'my minister.'"

'Lay ministers bring a lot of life experience'

To express their disapproval of the current rules, the presbytery presented an overture to the 2003 General Assembly asking to establish standards, education and responsibilities for lay missionaries. "As much as we're tied to education, I think there is a place for lay pastors to be recognized," said Ms. Dorcas. "They bring a lot of life experience. We're asking that they be allowed to perform the sacraments for the people they serve." The 2004 assembly decided to create a task force to establish standards. Their conclu-

sions are expected at the 132nd assembly in 2006.

One way to stimulate interest in the presbytery is having students of theological colleges complete their internship placements there. This provides a great way to familiarize them with the issues of rural ministry. "As agriculture goes, so goes the life of the congregation," said Rev. John Ferrier, minister at Knox in Weyburn. And with crop production down, the needs of members change. Offerings are often taken to help those who are suffering from farming losses. "We continue to be good listeners and to walk with the people through it," said Ms. Dorcas. "We don't pretend that it's not there."

Despite challenges, there are encouraging signs. Trinity Church in Grenfell, a ten-year-old church that has already paid off its mortgage, was originally part of a three-point charge. It's now challenging itself by striking out on its own — a prospect Ms. Dorcas finds exciting, and a clue to the resiliency of Assiniboia's people. "We persevere," she said. "Presbyterian people in Saskatchewan are very strong." **R**



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A case of coyote speculation

Loving God is the only thing we need to boast about

By David Webber

It's a dog," said Chelsea, firmly. "It is not. It's a coyote," Linda said, sounding like mothers everywhere speaking to preteen daughters.

"A coyote wouldn't just lie there on the ice sleeping," said Chelsea. "It's that dog that the neighbours said their friends lost a couple of days ago while visiting with them. Dad, what do you think it is?"

I had just walked into the kitchen to graze a little from the fridge when binoculars were thrust into my face. Chelsea pointed to a dark object lying on the ice on the opposite side of the lake. I peered carefully. I fiddled with the focus and looked again.

"Well, what is it?" asked Chelsea.

"It's dead," I said, trying to sound as knowledgeable as I could.

"It is not!" Linda snorted with disgust. "It keeps raising its head and looking around."

"Yeah," added Chelsea.

I'd done it again — walked into an ambush and was getting it in both ears. By this stage in my life I should know that whenever I stumble between mother and daughter in the midst of any kind of disagreement, I become the one thing that they can agree upon: that I'm wrong. Still squinting through the binoculars, I tried to figure a way out of the uncomfortable peacemaking position I'd stumbled into.

"It's a dog," I said, adjusting the focus some more. "No, I think it's definitely a coyote. No, I can see it now, it is unquestionably a dog. Hey, it moved!"

"We told you so," sung Linda and Chelsea in their best choral arrangement. "But what is it?"

"It's not dead," I said.

"You're a quick study, hon," said Linda. "Too bad you can't see too good."

That was a low blow. I don't handle middle age well. Sometimes I hate the truth, and the truth is my old eyes are deteriorating faster than road-kill in July. Even with the aid of good binoculars, distant objects are hard for me to make out.

I backed out of the kitchen discussion with what grace I could muster. There was only one thing to do: get a closer look. Chelsea joined me and together we cross-country skied across the lake ice. We kept behind a little island so that the animal would not hear or see us until we

were quite close. Then, at the last minute, we skied out from behind the island to solve the mystery. It was a coyote, and it slinked away as soon as it saw us. Linda was right.

We skied back silently. I thought about how you never really know what you're dealing with until you get good and close to it. Mind you, I suppose you could say that some of us have to get closer than others to really know. But as I glided across the ice, pondering this case of coyote speculation, it struck me that



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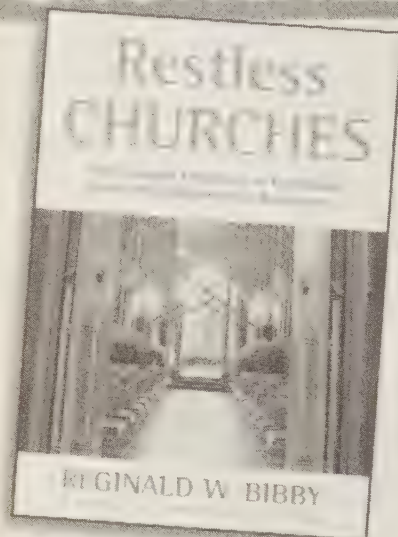
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even though I was the only one whose eyes were really bad, both Linda and Chelsea — with 20/20 vision — really couldn't see a whole lot better than I.

That evening, I looked through scripture and the two verses of Jeremiah where God says: "Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches. Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me..." (Jeremiah 9.23-24) I thought about human wisdom and the things that often seem to prevent me from truly knowing God. For me, human wisdom is like a pair of binoculars when it comes to God: it's a delightful invention but it encourages distant viewing. Regardless of whether human wisdom is

Whether I look at Jesus' birth through the lens of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, I just can't get away from the birth of Jesus being a profound case of God taking the initiative to get closer, to be known. With the birth of Jesus, born of God, born of Mary, God pushes right into my face.

theological, philosophical, or ideological in nature, in my experience, it often seems to hold me back from really knowing God.

I thought about human strength and how it has been little help for me in knowing God. My times of really coming to know God have been when I am at my weakest. My strength seems to be like a wall that I have to crawl over to know God intimately. Like the Psalmist, I've known blessing in my times of infirmity. I've come to know that it is good for me when I am afflicted for then I know Him and His ways. (Ps. 119.71) Like the Apostle, I have come to know the grace of weakness and that when I am weak, then I know He who is strong. (1 Corinthians 12.9)

I thought about human wealth and prosperity. Wealth has not helped much in knowing God, at least in my very limited experience with it. I can't really say why I am always wishing for more of it. Jesus said something like 'it would be easier for a BMW to pass through a syringe, than for a rich person to enter the realm of God.' (Matthew 19.24) On the one hand, wealth is sort of like human strength, it just encourages a

pathetic self-sufficiency that holds one away from God. On the other hand, wealth seems to be a huge distraction. I don't handle distractions very well.

It is the Advent season and I've been reading many of the Christmas readings in Scripture. This year, the case of coyote speculation heightening my awareness of the need for getting close, all of the readings seem to be saying one thing to me. Whether I look at Jesus' birth through the lens of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, I just can't get away from the birth of Jesus being a profound case of God taking the initiative to get closer, to be known. It reminded me of reading Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics one Christmas season years ago. At one point in developing his

Christology, Barth makes a huge case for the necessity of the Virgin Birth. His point is that with the Holy Spirit coming upon the Virgin Mary, Mary is the 'Mother of God' and Jesus is real 'Emmanuel.' God is no longer some abstract theological notion nor a case of distant speculation. With the birth of Jesus, born of God, born of Mary, God pushes right into my face and speaks: See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands. (Isaiah 49.16)

Getting closer. It's the only way I know of for truly getting to know anything or anyone. Out of all the things one could have, God says that knowing him intimately and acting with steadfast love, justice and righteousness are the only things worth boasting about. And as far as God is concerned, knowing him intimately and becoming like him in action is what brings delight to Him. (Jeremiah. 9.24 & Hosea. 6.6) To do this, you just have to get closer. **R**

Rev. David Webber is a contributing editor to the *Record*. He is a minister of the Cariboo, B.C. house church ministry and the author of *From Under a Blazing Aspen*, *And the Aspens Whisper* and the recently published *Like a Winter's Aspen: Embracing the Creator's Fire*.

Multi-cultis wreak havoc — it's about time

Immigrants bring fresh air to stale traditions

by Andrew Faiz

I was once at a Canadian Presbyterian church with a large African contingent, for Thanksgiving service. After the service they had a fundraising auction in the African tradition. The first item for bid was a glass of water. A glass of tap water, in an ordinary glass. The bidding was heated and the item sold for \$500. The winning bidder walked to the front of the church, to thunderous applause, and drank their very expensive beverage. The rest of the items, mostly homemade goodies, the standard fundraisers fare — pies, cakes, cookies — also went for tens and hundreds of dollars.

How very un-Presbyterian. All other church fundraisers I've attended over the decades are exactly the opposite — how much can be bought for how little, not how little for how much.

A minister with a large Korean contingent in his congregation, in the early 80s, was often asked to bless the corner stores his new-congregants were then purchasing. He told me he always felt awkward standing at the front of the store with the cigarettes behind the counter and the pornography on the magazine stand giving God's blessing to the business. But, the Koreans never felt the irony, nor were they embarrassed. These were the items they needed to include in their inventory to have a successful business. And so the minister gave the blessing in respect to the Korean Presbyterian tradition.

My own home congregation is an anomaly in the Presbyterian tradition. It is housed in a dense multi-ethnic neighbourhood with residents from about a hundred different countries speaking as many languages. Our congregation alone represents countries across the globe — from Pak-

istan, India, Ghana, Egypt, Guyana and others. (An Albanian Orthodox man, two days in the country, dropped by the other Sunday. It's that kind of church.) We have some 'Canadians' and a token Scot. It is the inverse of most congregations.

This complicated mixture is experienced obviously during our pot-lucks, which are heavier with rices and curries than crustless sandwiches. (You should drop by sometime; call first.) But, there are subtler differences. They show in the

We have been like Nero — fiddling while the house burns

service, in its order and its substance. Over the years we have experimented with service and worship, reflecting, borrowing, testing different reformed and evangelical traditions. It was a great place to be a teenager, while I was questioning my world, so was my church. It was exciting.

(In my early twenties I worked as a lay-minister in small towns out west. It was a culture shock. My experimental ethnic background proved the worst training I could have. I was in some time-warp of traditional Scottish Presbyterianism.)

I misspoke earlier. My church is not an anomaly. There are more congregations like it, littered in urban centers across the country. They are all yearning to find something similar: a new language, a different voice, by which to speak to the immigrants taking over the pews.

This multi-culturalization of the country, and of our church, is one of the biggest shifts in our culture. It permeates

the dialogue of our communities. We no longer have the safety of a singular tradition. (Or, only two solitudes.) The comfortable response in our church for decades has been to welcome the bodies, but not the culture. We have sought — often through this very organ — to retrain these cultures in 'our reformed tradition'. The condescension has not gone unnoticed. It has been the equivalent of playing Nero — fiddling while the house burns down.

Tradition is a funny thing. Born of faith and a desire for ritual, it soon becomes encrusted. Reformed tradition is an oxymoron to my mind. I blame this on my immigrant experience, which is about regeneration. Or should be. An immigrant has two choices: retreat to the old culture and traditions or experience the new. I took the latter route, living through several rebirths, and recommend it for everybody. In the process I have become congenitally impatient with 'tradition'.

What we haven't sought, certainly not enough, is to shift our traditions to new ones sitting in our pews. While the Celtic tradition is proud and wonderful, so is, for argument's sake, the African. Think of that fundraiser. It quantifies spirituality. It gives a value to faith. It puts money where the mouth is. Faith is no longer something one does for an hour a week, a comfortable habit, a safe ritual. It's something one has to earn, earn for and be worthy of. It's a scary tradition; and exciting. **R**

Andrew Faiz is a journalist, producer, filmmaker and a keen critic of popular culture. He is also an elder at Gateway Community Church in Toronto. You can contact Andrew at afaiz@presbyterian.ca.

The Rev. E. Margaret MacNaughton

She left the church tangible deeds

by Margaret Henderson

A woman of vibrant Christian faith. A trailblazer. A person dedicated to bringing calm, order and beauty to her work.

One who encouraged the development of others.

Someone who possessed sophistication, creativity, generosity, love, acceptance of others, courage and an absolute determination to live her life to the full.

With these words a niece, a friend and a colleague paid tribute to Margaret MacNaughton at a memorial service on Oct. 30, 2004 at Rosedale Presbyterian Church in Toronto. As we were comforted by the words of the liturgy we realized it was Margaret's parting gift to us; for she was the editor of the Book of Common Worship from which the service was taken. "I hope to be sent out of the world with trumpets in celebration of the resurrection," Margaret said in 1984 in a *Record* interview about worship. This hope must have been forgotten or replaced as there were no trumpets at Margaret's memorial service, but she was sent out with a celebration of her life and of the resurrection.

Her absolute determination to live life to the full even in the face of death is just one of the characteristics that made Margaret such a remarkable person. The twinkle in her eye was not dulled; her infectious laugh was not silenced. All who had contact with her in the last few months of her life marvelled at her capacity, often with the aid of pain killers, to continue doing the things she enjoyed and/or considered important. This spirit was captured in a trip to Ottawa in June, where she joined a tea party for the 'Famous Five' at a monument to the group of women who won the battle in 1929 to have Canadian women recognized as persons.



In 1965, Margaret reflected in an essay "No response to the Lord of Life is more appropriate or valuable than to live decisively and responsively in each day as one who has been chosen to know and participate in the unsearchable mysteries of God and God's ways with humanity." Margaret was true to this aim. Her life attests to decisive and responsive living.

Margaret was born in Moose Jaw, Sask. and grew up on a farm near Briercrest. After teacher training, she taught in a little one-room school house near Hearne, Sask. In 1949, Margaret graduated from the University of Toronto and the Presbyterian Missionary and Deaconess Training School. She was designated as a deaconess and became Director of Christian Education at Grace Presbyterian Church, Calgary, Alberta. From 1951-54, Margaret served as Regional secretary for Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. In 1954, she took up the position of Director of Christian Education in Victoria Presbyterian Church, Toronto, Ont. She accepted the position of Girl's Work Secretary and Director of Teenage Work with the Board of Christian Education in 1955. Her last two

years with the Board were as contract writer for the Presbyterian Church School curriculum.

Margaret left the Board of Christian Education in 1961 to attend Union Theological Seminary in New York and graduated in 1965 with both a Master of Religious Education and a Master of Divinity degree. Margaret accepted a position with the United Presbyterian Church USA doing editorial work. She was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in 1973 by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

Margaret's church experience spanned the time before and after the decision to ordain women. From 1956-58, she was one of four women who were named as consultants to the Committee on the Place of Women in the Church. These women could speak but not vote and their names were not recorded. At the General Assembly in 1957, Margaret was given permission to speak. She begged the assembly to continue its study in order that it might respond, not to the pressures of the people, but to the guidance of the Holy Spirit leading the Church into the future. Nine years later the church declared that women could be ordained. After another ten years Margaret joined the ranks of the ministry of Word and Sacraments in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In 1976, Margaret returned to Canada to produce Heritage Resources for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This material was designed to provide Canadian Presbyterian content to the curriculum of all ages. From 1976-82, Margaret also served on the Church Doctrine Committee and chaired a sub-committee on the place of children at the Lord's Table. In 1982, Margaret was appointed to work with the Worship Committee to

produce the Book of Common Worship. Margaret retired in 1991 but took on yet another editing task which she shared with Dr. Dorcas Gordon. *Counting the Women: Sermons by Women* was published in 1994.

Margaret's work with the Presbyterian Church allowed her to channel her gifts and experience in writing, editing, coordinating, her keen interest in the arts, her qualities of vision and humour and her passion for church history and worship into the service of God.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. ... They will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them." (Rev. 14:13) These words were read at Margaret's memorial service. Margaret has left the church several tangible deeds that will continue to shape the church, but her intangible deeds of a life well lived, of her influence in the lives of others, will also be her legacy. **R**

Margaret Henderson is a senior administrator in Ministry and Church Vocations and an elder at St. Andrew's Humber Heights Presbyterian Church in Toronto.

obituaries

Aitcheson, Robert John "Jack", 75, died September 29, 2004, a member of Avonton Presbyterian Church, Avonton, ON.

Esler, Rev. J. Reynolds, died on September 1, 2004, at the age of 90, in Port Colborne, Ontario.

Reynolds was the last survivor among the ten children of Rev. Alexander and Annie Esler. One of his brothers, MacKay, was a fellow minister of the Presbyterian Church; his sister Pauline was the long-time deaconess of Knox Church, Toronto.

Reynolds graduated from Knox College in 1938. His first congregation was the joint charge of Ripley and Ashfield, Ontario, where he served until 1941, when he was called to Alexandra Church in Brantford, Ontario. He remained there for two decades, moving to First Church, Port Colborne, Ontario in 1961.

He retired in 1982 and was appointed Minister Emeritus at First Church that year.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Marion Esler, and by two sons, David and Jamie, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Mackay, Rev. Murdo, Minister of the Millerton/Derby Pastoral Charge, Miramichi, New Brunswick, passed away on August 29th, 2004, after a long illness with cancer. He was the son of the late Norman and Mary Mackay, Isle of Harris, Scotland. He held many degrees in Education and Theology having studied at Edinburgh, Saskatchewan and McGill Universities. He was both an educator and a minister. Fluent in many languages, he read Hebrew, Greek and Gaelic daily. He arrived in Canada in 1969 to teach in Saskatchewan, moved to Montreal then to the Millerton/Derby Pastoral Charge in 1997. Three sisters: Mamie and Christeen of Scotland and twin

sister Margaret of Calgary, survive him. He served as the first Protestant Chaplain at the Miramichi Regional Hospital for five years. He was a strong believer in ecumenism and promoted sharing of services among the churches. His courageous fight to maintain his preaching ability, the reaffirming of his faith and his determination to be of service to God until the end will always be remembered by his Congregation. He will also be remembered for the depth of his understanding of the Bible and his ability to walk and talk with all Christians.

McIntosh, Rev. Alvin, 86, died August 23, 2004 in London, ON, surrounded by his family. He was born and raised on a farm in Bruce County, ON, graduating from Allenford High School, Toronto Bible College (Tyndale), University of Western Ontario, and Knox College.

He was ordained in 1950 in Southampton, ON. Receiving training at the Hartford Seminary School of Missions in Connecticut, he served on the Bhil Field, Central India (1952-1964). After returning to Canada, he entered the field of Probation and Parole and worked in Welland and Niagara Falls until retirement in 1983, moving to London in 1989.


Alvin is survived by his wife Catherine (Graham), four daughters, Ellen, Martha, Beth and Joanne, their husbands and children.

Scott, Barbara Mary, 78, a longtime member of Avonton Presbyterian Church, Avonton, ON passed away Tuesday, October 19, 2004.

Rate for obituary notices: \$1 per word or \$55 per column inch (the lower amount) plus GST. **Contact the Record office regarding items for this column.**

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Solution to Word Search on page 50

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H T I A F G Y E N R U O J I D R

FOR A CHILD HAS BEEN BORN FOR US

For a child has been born for us,
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authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6

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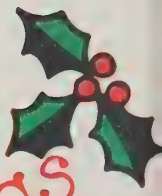
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Merry Christmas 

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WORDSEARCH

Search in the puzzle on the left for each of the words listed below.

HIDDEN MESSAGE

Take the unused letters and place them in order on the dotted lines, until you have the message. Please note, there will be extra letters at the end.

WORD SEARCH

ANGEL	GABRIEL	JESUS	NEWS
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BABY	GLORY	JOURNEY	PEACE
BETHLEHEM	GOD	JOY	PRAISE
BIRTH	GOLD	KING	PRAYER
CHRIST	GRACE	LAMB	SHEEP
DREAM	HEART	LIFE	SHEPHERDS
EGYPT	HOLY	LIGHT	SIMEON
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Any time of the year, you can check out more learning activities online at www.presbyterian.ca/record/wonder.html

(Solution on page 47)

Grandpa's greatest gift

God answers our greatest needs

Soft voices wake me on a cold December morning. "Is it time yet, Dad? Is it time?" Outside our window, a white quilt blankets the ground. Three excited children pull at my covers, hopping on bare feet, and calling through the dark: "Come on, Dad, come on."

Ah, yes. Now I remember. It's Christmas day. It's also ridiculously early.

Down the hall we go, coming to a halt before five stockings, each concealing delectable and forbidden treasures.

"What about we eat 'em?" Jeffrey is three. He speaks for the others.

"Not yet," I reply. "Wait until Mommy wakes up."

We plug in the Christmas tree lights and then cuddle on the couch. While the world sleeps, I tell them a tale from my childhood. A tale of Christmas past, largely true, and translated here for grownups...

Once a year, we searched the skies for Grandpa. He always touched down during the Christmas season, so the five kids would wait in the airport, our noses pressed against the frozen glass in painful anticipation. Then, sure enough, the silver bird would appear, cutting through the clouds just for us.

Our tradition at this point was to slap each other's hands and jump up and down until our heads hurt. And with good reason: Grandpa always brought a gallon of genuine maple syrup and a brown leather suitcase heavy with brightly wrapped packages (mostly for my sister).

We admired Grandpa for other reasons. He was the only one I knew who drank cough syrup straight from the bottle, oblivious to its high alcoholic content. And you couldn't help but admire his head, too. It was as smooth as polished brass — only it grew less hair. My brother Tim claimed the barber glued a

stainless steel bowl to Grandpa's head one day and said, "That will be \$1.50." Whatever the case, we couldn't get enough of running our hands over it and gazing at our reflections.

We also loved Grandpa for his size. He was...well, a big man, poundage-wise. Grandpa Callaway could never be found far from a box of chocolates, and the years had charged him for it. There were, however, definite advantages to Grandpa's girth. It was perfect to hide behind during certain games we'd play, and when he laughed — which was often — he put his whole body into it. Perhaps best of all, the five of us found room on Grandpa's lap simultaneously to hear the Christmas story, year after year.

One Christmas, it looked like Grandpa's plane had arrived without him. This was cause for concern, particularly for the young ones who couldn't help but wonder where the maple syrup went. Of course, we weren't concerned only with maple syrup. No, we were far more sensitive than that. We wondered where the presents were. So we waited and we watched.

Other grandfathers arrived to the hugs and kisses of kids like us. But not Grandpa Callaway.

Then Dad noticed someone off to one side. Grandpa's luggage, it seemed, had not made the journey with him. "Oh ssssay!" said Grandpa, his false teeth hissing.

I pieced the implications together. No maple syrup. No brightly wrapped presents. No chocolates. Then the strangest thing happened. I realized it didn't matter. Christmas would come without maple syrup. Christmas would come without presents. Games would be played. Songs would be sung. Stories would be told. And, much more, Grandpa would be there. He had brought

us the best gift of all: himself.

Grandpa wasn't taking it quite so well. As we climbed into the car, I heard him mutter, "Oh say." And I watched as he reached for the cough syrup.

"Didn't you get anything at all?" asks my son Stephen.

"Yes, we did. But I don't remember much about the presents. I just remember Grandpa."

"Did he tell you lots of stories?"

"Oh yes. He especially loved to read us the Christmas story — of the Light that came blazing into the world, landing in a most unusual place, just for us. Of the Son of God in a barn. And he told us that God could have given us anything He wanted. But He gave us the best gift of all: Himself. That's what I hope you remember when you think of Christmas."

The kids are silent for a moment. Above us, suspended from red string, is a row of Christmas cards. In the center hangs my favorite:

"If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist.
If our greatest need had been pleasure,
God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness,
so God sent us a Savior!"

In the glow of the Christmas tree, Rachael and Stephen sit in wonder.

"Tell it again, Daddy," they say.

Jeffrey sits quietly, looking at the stockings, wondering about something else. "What about we eat 'em," he says. **R**

Phil Callaway is a popular author and speaker. You can visit him online at www.philcallaway.com



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